



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - March 12, 2012
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Coastal Scientists Lead Expedition to Observe Historic Development of a New Distributary Pass on the Mississippi River

Media Tour March 14, 2012 10:00 am

On Wednesday March 14, coastal scientists with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation will be leading an expedition to observe the Bohemia Spillway where an historical and geologic event is unfolding with the development of a new pass on the Mississippi River. The Bohemia Spillway area is the 12-mile reach on the east bank of the Mississippi River approximately 45 miles downriver of New Orleans. The Bohemia Spillway was created in 1926 by removal of artificial river flood protection levees. Without the artificial river levees, the river is free to flow across its bank during spring floods. For several years, LPBF has been investigating the response of the wetlands to the natural river overflow. The wetlands adjacent to the spillway appear to be more resilient and benefit from the periodic over flow of the river.

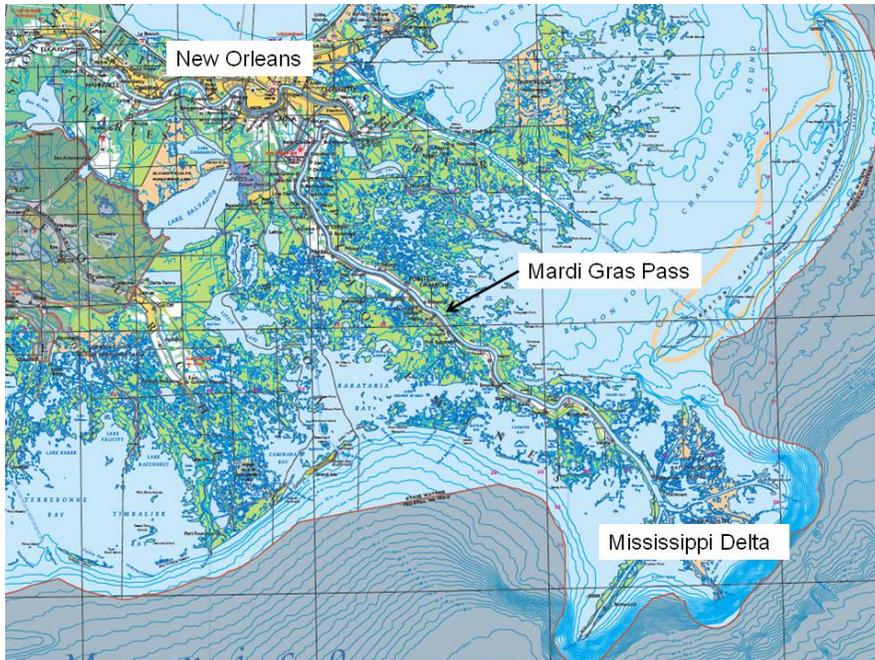
Since the 2011 flood on the Mississippi River, a new channel has been developing within the Bohemia Spillway by progressively cutting its extent toward the Mississippi River. The channel reached the river on Mardi Gras Day 2012, and is referred to as "Mardi Gras Pass." The new developing pass is 43.7 miles upriver from the infamous Head of Passes of the Mississippi Delta where the distinctive birds-foot pattern of passes is found. Mardi Gras Pass is now the most upriver natural outlet on the Mississippi River. Dr. John Lopez, Executive Director of LPBF, stated "*The development of this pass has been a marvel to see unfold. We are directly observing the natural power and processes of the Mississippi River to evolve without the artificial limitations of river levees.*" The Mardi Gras Pass development has been monitored closely by LPBF. Their observations suggest that with rising water on the river in the next two weeks that Mardi Gras Pass will enlarge and increase flow into the wetlands. Since the flow through the Pass is less than 2% of the river's flow, this development is not considered an immediate threat of flooding or to river navigation.

In what may be a fortunate coincidence, two new river diversion projects have been proposed by Federal and State agencies in the Bohemia Spillway as coastal restoration projects. These projects would divert Mississippi River flow and be constructed at tax-payers' expense. LPBF scientists suggest that in lieu of one of these artificial diversions, the river may provide freely a river diversion, and potentially save nearly a quarter billion dollars construction costs.

A boat tour of the Mardi Gras Pass (~ 1 hour) will be provided Wednesday departing from the Pointe a la Hache Harbor (Beshel's launch) , in East Pointe a la Hache, La.

Start 10:00 a.m. CDT Exit Hwy 39 & cross levee 29.568541 -89.765528

LPBF is a 501 (c3) whose mission is to restore and preserve the natural habitats of the Pontchartrain Basin. To learn more about LPBF and the Bohemia Spillway, please visit SaveOurLake.org (go to Coastal > Technical Reports > Bohemia Spillway Documentation).



Location of Mardi Gras Pass



Mardi Gras Pass as it breached into the Mississippi River February 2012

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