

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY'S ROLE IN NATURAL HAZARDS SUCH AS THE RECENT MARSH DIEBACK

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works to reduce the loss of life and property and to protect critical infrastructure from all types of hazards. FEMA accomplishes its mission through an established comprehensive management program that includes mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. At this time, however, natural disasters as exemplified by marsh dieback do not exist as an authority for the agency. FEMA Washington continues to assess its options on this matter and the long-term implications of its actions. In the meantime, because wetlands dampen storm surge and protect infrastructure, FEMA will join in partnership with resource agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources in addressing the "brown marsh" problem. FEMA believes that we can accomplish more if we cooperate together as a team, rather than as individual agencies. To this end, FEMA will share the information it possesses on coastal systems. Second, FEMA will help educate the public and decision makers about the problem and the value and functions of wetlands. FEMA remains focused on eliminating repetitive losses. In the future, the agency may choose to support a more resource-oriented project when the response makes a direct contribution to reducing the loss of life and property and protects infrastructure.