

# Miss. River wetlands must be reconstructed

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Scientists say the New Orleans flooding might have been prevented had the Mississippi River's delta and barrier islands been intact.

But now the scientists say a Manhattan Project-style effort must be made to restore the islands and marshes that once protected the Crescent City area from hurricanes, the San Francisco Chronicle reported Tuesday.

The river, over some 7,000 years, created a huge delta that sheltered the region from storm surges. But the delta, its wetlands and islands began disappearing after the river was diverted in 1930, preventing the depositing of silt and sand at its mouth, the report said.

Many scientists believe the delta and barrier islands must be reconstructed to ensure a catastrophe such as Hurricane Katrina is not repeated.

"New Orleans won't be safe from another storm like Katrina until we restore this hurricane buffer," Robert Twilley, a professor of wetland science at Louisiana State University, told the Chronicle. Twilley estimated such a marshland rehabilitation project might cost as much as \$14 billion.

Researchers estimate the storm surge potential is reduced by 1-foot for every square mile of wetland that is restored.

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