

Wetlands restoration: A false hope?

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CULLOWHEE, N.C., Oct. 1 (UPI) -- A U.S. scientist says Louisiana Coastal residents counting on wetlands restoration to protect storm buffeted infrastructure are waging a losing battle.

Western Carolina University researcher Robert Young, director of the school's Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines, said focusing on wetlands restoration provides "false hope" and prevents endangered communities from clearly planning for the future.

As hurricanes pounded the Gulf of Mexico this fall, Young said the media were filled with the words of politicians, policy makers, non-governmental organizations and local communities touting the importance of ongoing wetlands restoration projects as long-term storm protection for coastal communities and infrastructure.

"Unfortunately," he said, "there's little science to support this growing belief. If the government of the state of Louisiana wants to do its citizens the best service, it needs to begin to understand how it will relocate some of these communities."

Young is to present recommendations from a recent white paper, co-written by 26 coastal scientists and engineers, next week in Houston during the 2008 Joint Meeting of the Geological Society of America, the Soil Science Society of America, the American Society of Agronomy, the Crop Science Society of America and the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies.