

Coastal Louisiana Forests

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The cypress forests are important for holding together freshwater coastal wetlands, helping protect communities from hurricanes by reducing the storm surge, preventing erosion and acting as a filter for cleaning water. Louisiana can lay claim to about 40 percent of coastal wetlands in the Lower 48, yet the rate at which these treasures are destroyed is higher yet. For the past several decades, Louisiana has lost as much as 40 square miles of marsh each year — 80 percent of the nation's annual coastal wetland loss.

There is a new and disturbing threat to these forests: cypress mulch. The popularity of cypress mulch is endangering our coastal forests and the protection they provide our region. Instead of being a byproduct of the lumber industry, entire stands of cypress forest are being logged to produce cypress mulch. Recent scientific reports express concern that a majority of Louisiana's Cypress Forest will not grow back if it is logged.

This unique forested ecosystem is derived in part from their unusual deltaic landscape as a product of the Mississippi River. The ecosystem exists in a balance between dry land and fresh and saltwater. The forests provide habitat for threatened species (e.g., Louisiana black bear, bald eagle) and economically important species (e.g., crawfish and waterfowl). In addition, millions of birds, including virtually all of the eastern neo-tropical migrant bird species in the United States and numerous species from the western United States, migrate through the coastal forests of Louisiana during spring and fall migration.

For more information on the cypress mulch issue click here: <http://saveourcypress.org/>

For more information on this ecosystem click here to go to http://www.coastalforestswg.lsu.edu/SWG_FinalReport.pdf