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Coastal protection managers meet in Louisiana's first "levee school"

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BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - Louisiana's front line hurricane protection managers are getting their first-ever organized crash course in Louisiana's flood protection and coastal restoration efforts, dubbed "Louisiana Levee School."

The 3-day professional training program, which began today in Baton Rouge, is designed to help assist the levee board appointees understand their responsibilities, the flood control and protection work ongoing across state agencies and the state's master plan for coastal protection.

Sidney Coffee, the governor's executive assistant for coastal activities, says Louisiana's landscape is collapsing, with 1,900 square miles of land lost to coastal erosion since the Mississippi River levees were built in the 1930s and began starving the marshland of its natural rebuilding process. Another 500 square miles are projected to be lost in the next 50 years, threatening the nation's oil and gas supply, seafood supply and ecosystem.

The levee school program is hosted by the LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Sea Grant, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Officials said they plan to hold an annual levee school program with continuing education classes.

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