

TRANSCRIPT OF “PROTECTING THE CHENIER PLAIN” FILM

Below is the transcript of the expanded 13-minute film version.

“The Chenier Plain is one of the most globally significant ecoregions that we have, really in all the western hemisphere.” **Carter Smith**, Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

“This is one in a million. We love our coast, we love the hunting, the fishing, the family atmosphere that it brings.” **Dennis Scott**, Chenier Plain Alliance, Calcasieu Parish Police Jury.

“This is a breach.” **Dow Gene Anderson**, duck guide

“Over the last 75 years this 119,000-acre Chenier marsh has been under assault.” **Jeff Branick**, Jefferson County Judge

“What are some of the major threats to this system?” **Ed Arnett**, This American Land show host

“Sea level rise, salt water intrusion.” **Dr. Todd Merendino**, Ducks Unlimited

“When you start cutting channels through an area you can change the internal plumbing.” **Mike Rezsutek**, Texas Parks and Wildlife Area Biologist

“Hurricane Ike did a whole lot of damage. Also there is always that threat of another oil spill.” **Sarah Cerrone**, Chambers County Director of Economic Development and Special Projects.

“Our economy was hurt years ago so we are trying to restore what we lost.” **Jimmy Sylvia**, Chambers County Judge

“Millions of birds migrate to this area in the winter time. It’s very important we maintain what we have, and the first step is to protect our coastline.” **Phillip “Scooter” Trosclair**, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Department

“There’s no doubt that the stakes are high and certainly complacency is not an option.” **Carter Smith**

“We’re in the Houston, Port Arthur, Beaumont area of Texas. Some 50+ percent of the nation’s oil that we produce here in the U.S., as well as our imported oil is refined here in this particular area. It is also home to a large military base. Amidst all of this industrial complex is one of the most ecologically diverse and rich areas in North America. It’s called the Chenier Plain, and it stretches from the Houston area all the way over to the Southwest portion of Louisiana, some 5 million-acres of wetlands and marshes.” **Ed Arnett**

“This is one of the most important areas for wintering waterfowl, and wading birds and shorebirds in all of North America, particularly important as a larval or nursery area for finfish and shellfish. And of course the marshes and dunes play a critically important role in the resilience of these communities as the first line of defense against storm surges in the Gulf of Mexico.” **Carter Smith**

“When a storm comes ashore the water hits this rough area, right? And that knocks the energy down but when you lose the habitat, you lose that ability. So, salt water intrusion is one of the largest factors that the Chenier Plain is facing as far as a detriment to habitat - and that the plant communities can’t respond quick enough when the water changes from a fresh to a salt environment. It leads to plant death, leads to marsh breakup, and so it weakens the landscape as a whole. When you weaken the landscape, it reduces the storm surge buffer that happens.” **Dr. John Foret**, NOAA Wetland Ecologist

“We’re very, very dependent on this area, because of the fresh water. And it is a beautiful day.” **Dow Gene Anderson**

“This is Dow Gene Anderson and Dow is a local resident here in the Chenier Plain and a hunting and fishing guide, and Dow why don’t you tell us a little bit about what we are going to see today.” **Ed Arnett**

“We are going to see a levee that is breached in Sabine Lake in a 1,200 acre fresh water reservoir.” **Dow Gene Anderson**

“Let’s take a boat ride and take a look at it,” **Ed Arnett**

“Let’s do it.” **Dow Gene Anderson.** “See that boat? After Ike, all that came over here from Louisiana... You can see, right there is a good example, storm after storm, high tide after high tide it just has over time washed away,...and herein lies the breach.”

“How far in does the salt water actually penetrate into the fresh water?” **Ed Arnett**

“Well with it going back and forth, it is going to keep going,” **Dow Gene Anderson**

“So eventually this entire marsh is threatened and in jeopardy?” **Ed Arnett**

“Sure, and it is going to hurt the wildlife big time.” **Dow Gene Anderson**

“We’re on the inside and you can see all kind of evidence of the damage that it’s doing.”

“You know the high wind and waves from the storm energy, that will create erosion that will lift those plants away, and then the high salinities themselves, that will kill certain species.” **Dr. Todd Merendino**, Ducks Unlimited, Texas

“So Dow what’s it going to take to fix a breach like this, of this magnitude?” **Ed Arnett**

“You know, just the owners are not going to be able to afford to do this thing.” **Dow Gene Anderson**

“They’re going to need some help?” **Ed Arnett**

“Yes, and of course this is important to this whole area,” **Dow Gene Anderson**

“Over decades the Chenier Plain has literally been nibbled to death by a thousand paper cuts. There are a myriad of challenges that are confronting this landscape.” **Carter Smith**

“The best way to do it is by improving fresh water inflows.” **Jeff Branick**

“Fortunately, we have strong leadership in the region and very experienced fisheries and wildlife biologists that know how to implement restoration and enhancement projects and initiatives to really help put Humpty Dumpty back together again.” **Carter Smith**

“We’re building a rather large berm on McFaddin that’s preventing coastal waters from washing in.” **Tim Cooper**, Texas Chenier Plain National Wildlife Refuge Complex Manager

“What we’re doing is partnering with industry to do what is called beneficial use of dredge material. Where we’ll take dredge material, put a layer on top of the marsh that is degrading, let it settle and revegetate and support a healthy plant population again.” **Michael Rezsutek**

“So we have the terrace project here that is just recently constructed and what this will do is create a wind break so we can lower the internal shoreline erosion in the marsh area.” **Scooter Trosclair**

“Just west of here is called the Holly Beach Breakwater Project. It is using large boulders, Volkswagen-sized boulders, offshore to protect the highway in that particular stretch of the state.” **Dr. John Foret**

“The threats to these coastal wetlands have all been well identified. And there are also a number of solutions, but implementing those solutions takes money.” **Ed Arnett**

“We’re going to start on page two, under economic development and tourism.” **Jimmy Sylvia**

“It’s funding that most of these small communities don’t have. So many of them are seeking funds that are available after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the settlement from British Petroleum.” **Ed Arnett.**
“So the RESTORE Act was a fund that was created after the Deepwater Horizon incident?”

“It’s that once in a lifetime kind of money that you never see coming from the federal government.” **Sarah Cerrone.** “So, we are definitely trying to get our share of it.”

“You know as we reflect on this spill, it transpired in April of 2010, over 1,200 miles of shoreline from Florida to Eastern Texas were fouled and oiled by the spill and certainly the Chenier Plain was deeply affected by this.” **Carter Smith**

“What you’ve got is an outdoorsman’s paradise down here in the middle of the largest refineries and chemical plants in the world.” **John Durkay,** General Counsel, Industry of South East Texas, and Mayor, Taylor Landing

“All of the leaders in those areas recognize undoubtedly that the health of their communities, the health of their economies, are inextricably linked to the health of the ecological systems surrounding them.”

Carter Smith

(Freeze frame quote below)

The Sabine Watershed usually supplies over half the fresh water reaching the Gulf of Mexico from Texas.

“We are going up to the ‘Survivor Tree’... So what we have is the bayou and the associated swamps, and together they create that ecosystem that cleanses the water. Having said all that, you can see the color of the water here is pretty brown and that is partly because we get a lot of pollution into the aquatic systems and some of that can be filtered by the existing vegetation but the habitats are not big enough to take it all out.” **Rick Lewandowski**, Director, Shangri-La Botanical Gardens

“So much has changed over the years as we populated more and as we polluted more.” This is Jimmy Sims the Mayor of Orange, **host Ed Arnett** “I remember in those early childhood days, actually swimming across the bayou, in the bayous, fishing in the bayous so it was a beautiful, clear stream of water.” **Jimmy Sims**, Mayor of Orange

“In Hurricane Ike in 2008, the water actually came up to the top step on that house.” **Rick Lewandowski**

“Wow. To the top step.” **Ed Arnett**

“Hurricanes continually effect vegetation and the water streams.”
Jimmy Sims

“What you are seeing here is the ‘Survivor Tree’. A 1241, or so, year-old tree. And it has survived countless storms and floods and yet it’s here today.” **Rick Lewandowski**

“You can’t fight Mother Nature, but you can be prepared.” **Ann Galassi**, Assistant General Manager of Administration, Sabine River Authority

“This is Ann Galassi of the Sabine River Authority,” **Ed Arnett**

“The number one solution for taking care of the pollutants in Adams and Cow bayous is a regional waste water treatment facility. Of course it would be very costly, at \$56 million. It would, you know, really break the backs of the communities here.” **Ann Galassi**

“Waterways are used for transporting petroleum products and it’s really important to keep these channels open.” **Gene Bouillion**, Director & CEO, Orange County Navigation and Port District.

“This is Gene Bouillion and he’s the director here at the Port of Orange,” **Ed Arnett**. “Gene, maybe you can tell us a little bit about this particular barge that appears to be beached.”

“Yes during Hurricane Ike, that barge floated up on the bank and is hard aground, and there is asphalt in it, and so it would be quite expensive, probably \$2 to \$3 million, to remove it.” **Gene Bouillion**

“What funding sources are available and how are you going to propose getting this taken care of?” **Ed Arnett**

“Well the RESTORE money under the BP Deepwater Horizon settlement, through State of Texas, we’re exploring options there.”
Gene Bouillion.

“Our area has always been heavy into industry. I think most folks understand, that’s where our tax base is, that’s where our jobs are and you’ve got to live with industry.” **Jimmy Sylvia**

“Within this five million acre landscape is some of the most valuable petrochemical infrastructure that we have in all of the United States, so the stakes are high. **Carter Smith**

Minute 10:50 to 11:49 Duck hunting sequence stressing importance of the fresh water marsh, harvesting protein from the land, outdoor connection, family tradition, and duck hunting economy.

“I’m 75-years old. I’ve been hunting this area right here all my life, so it is very important not only to me but the whole area because we all depend on it. “ **Dow Gene Anderson**

“Really lives and livelihoods are dependent upon on a healthy coast. And so it is critically important that we use this opportunity to invest further in it and help to rebuild and restore and enhance these natural systems which are so critically important to the future of these communities now and to come.” **Carter Smith**