

# Louisiana tribe to relocate due to sea level rise

BY SEBASTIEN MALO  
REUTERS

NEW YORK — A small Native American community in coastal Louisiana is to be resettled after losing nearly all its land partly due to rising seas, a first in the United States.

The band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, a Native American tribe living in the Louisiana coastal wetlands, has lost some 98 percent of its land since the 1950s.

This is the first time an entire community has had to be relocated due in part to rising sea levels, said Marion McFadden, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The land loss is also due to factors such as erosion and sediment mismanagement, a Louisiana official said.

The band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw have lived and fished on the Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana's coastal south since the 1800s, a tribe's spokesman said.

But land loss has caused the island to shrink from some 15,000 acres to a strip of about a quarter-mile wide

by a half-mile long, a study by Northern Arizona University shows.

**Sea levels have already risen by some 8 inches in coastal Louisiana over the last 50 years**

From a peak of some 400 inhabitants, only around 100 remain. The loss of land to the sea and houses to hurricanes have caused families to leave, said Boyo Billiot, the tribe's deputy chief said in a telephone briefing to reporters.

"No one likes to leave an area where they have history, a lot of memories," said Billiot. "We are people of the bayou. Water has played a central role in who we are."

Climate advocacy group Climate Nexus said the relocation of the tribe was creating new "refugees" of climate change.

But Louisiana and federal government officials offered a different interpretation.

"We really don't think of the community as refugees. I think of refugees as being

scattered and chaotic retreat. This is a resettlement and we are careful to use that word," said Patrick Forbes, a Louisiana state official.

The relocation would be subsidized by around \$48 million in government funds, said Forbes, and would take a few years to complete.

Louisiana's coast has been sinking at a fast pace compared to most U.S. coastal areas, a phenomenon officials attribute to sea levels rise but also erosion, the official said. Sea levels have already risen by some 8 inches in coastal Louisiana over the last 50 years or so.

According to a 2014 U.S. government report, as global sea levels continue to rise, relative sea level rise will be greater along some coasts such as in Louisiana and Texas.

The continuous decline of the band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw population has been threatening the tribe's ancestral traditions, including those related to fishing such as the weaving of catch nets.

"As the people leave out, culture goes with it,"



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Floodwaters leave the banks of Bayou Manchac, near Baton Rouge this week. Storm-weary residents of Louisiana and Mississippi watched for more flooding from drenching rains that inundated homes and prompted thousands of rescues. Land loss has caused a coastal Native American tribe to be relocated partly due to rising seas and flooding.

said Billiot.

Reflecting on the tribe's attachment to Isle de Jean Charles, he recalled his late

grandfather's prophetic words.

"He said... 'The people will have to leave from the island'. But he said you all don't dis-

turb the dead that are buried there because now a lot are in the water where the graves were at."

## SeaWorld to end orca breeding

Theme park announces 'last generation' in captive program

BY J. FREEDOM DU LAC  
AND LINDSEY BEVER  
THE WASHINGTON POST

Embattled theme-park operator SeaWorld announced Thursday that it is ending its controversial captive-breeding program for orcas, meaning the killer whales in its care "will be the last generation of orcas at SeaWorld."

The company said it is ending "all orca breeding as of today," officially putting an end to a practice animal-rights activists have called inhumane — and that already had been prohibited by officials in California.

"Why the big news?" the company said in a statement. "SeaWorld has been listening and we're changing. Society is changing and we're changing with it. SeaWorld is finding new ways to continue to deliver on our purpose to inspire all our guest to take action to protect wild animals and wild places."

SeaWorld has come under intense scrutiny over its treatment of captive killer whales since the highly critical 2013 documentary "Blackfish," which spotlighted the animals' living conditions and the dangers posed to their handlers.

The company's CEO resigned in December 2014 after months of declining revenue and attendance at its 11 parks across the United States. Last year, SeaWorld announced the end of its iconic killer whale shows in San Diego.

In October, the California Coastal Commission said SeaWorld would not be permitted to breed the animals while in captivity. The new breeding restrictions — announced as the commission approved an expansion of SeaWorld San Diego's killer whale habitat — made it likely that the orcas in captivity would be among the company's last. On Thursday, SeaWorld made it official.

"This announcement reaffirms our commitment to not collect marine mammals from the wild," SeaWorld said. "After all, we haven't collected an orca from the wild in almost 40 years, and the orcas at SeaWorld were either born there or have spent almost their entire lives in human care."

The Humane Society of the United States, which partnered with SeaWorld on its new policies, praised Thursday's announcement.

"These two organizations have been long-time adversaries, but we're excited now to see the company transforming its operations for the better on animal welfare," Humane Society president and CEO Wayne Pacelle said in a statement. "Today's announcement signals that the era of captive display of orcas will end and that SeaWorld will redouble its work around rescue and rehabilitation of marine mammals in crisis and partner with us to tackle global threats to marine creatures."



REUTERS FILE

Young children get a close-up view of an Orca whale during a visit to SeaWorld in San Diego, California, 2014. Bowing to years of pressure from animal rights activists, the theme park operator said on Thursday it would stop breeding killer whales and that those currently at its parks would be the last.

The orcas in captivity will not be released into the wild.

SeaWorld Entertainment president and chief executive Joel Manby said in an op-ed published by the Los Angeles Times that "some critics want us to go even further; they want us to 'set free' the orcas currently in our care. But that's not a wise option.

"Most of our orcas were born at SeaWorld, and those that were born in the wild have been in our parks for the majority of their lives. If we release them into the ocean, they will likely die. In fact, no orca or dolphin born under human care has ever survived release into the wild. Even the attempt to re-

turn the whale from 'Free Willy,' Keiko, who was born in the wild, was a failure.

"For as long as they live, the orcas at SeaWorld will stay in our parks. They'll continue to receive the highest-quality care, based on the latest advances in marine veterinary medicine, science and zoological best practices."

"Blackfish," the documentary that inflamed the SeaWorld backlash, focused on the life of Tilikum, a SeaWorld orca that killed one of his trainers and is associated with two other deaths. Last week, SeaWorld Orlando announced that Tilikum is suffering from an illness that may take his life.

## \$65M in Fed grants to go to coal areas

Funding aimed for mining jobs loss

BY BILL ESTEP  
LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER

The Obama Administration has announced the availability of \$65.8 million in grant funding to help communities hurt by a decline in the coal economy.

Agencies and nonprofits in Kentucky received a total of \$6 million through the program last year.

Thursday's announcement opens the way for a new round of applications.

The grants are part of what is called the POWER program, for Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization.

The initiative is aimed at creating jobs and diversifying the economy of places where the loss of jobs in coal and related industries, including power plants and transportation, has caused economic hardship.

More than half the coal jobs in Eastern Kentucky have disappeared since 2012.

Many people in the region blame the downturn on tougher federal rules to protect air and water quality, but analysts cite a variety of factors. Those include not just environmental rules, but competition from cheap, cleaner-burning natural gas and high mining costs in Central Appalachia.

Jason Walsh, a senior White House adviser, said in a conference call Thursday

that there might be disagreement on why coal is in decline, but everyone should be able to agree about the need to help coal communities that have powered the nation but are now struggling.

The POWER initiative is part of a larger proposal by the administration.

Other notable pieces include proposals to shore up the health and pension funds of union miners and to speed up the release of \$1 billion in abandoned mine land money for reclamation projects tied to economic development.

Last year, the state of Kentucky received \$3 million through the POWER initiative for programs related to a planned high-speed Internet network for Eastern Kentucky, such as helping businesses get involved in e-commerce.

"Many communities across Appalachia — from coal mines to Main Streets — are being impacted as the world changes the way it produces and consumes electricity," said Earl Gohl, federal co-chairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission. "The POWER initiative can be a game-changer for Appalachia by partnering with these communities and investing federal resources to support local initiatives that will forge sustainable economic paths for the future."

## Cultivate your seedling skills

BY BARBARA DAMROSCH  
THE WASHINGTON POST

"As the twig is bent, so grows the tree" is a good maxim, as relevant to raising children as it is to training a tree's upper scaffold. But in spring, when many of the plants in our lives are seedlings, it pays to look downward. As the roots are nurtured, so grows the tomato.

For vegetables that are commonly direct-sown, such as spinach, carrots and peas, a good start is a simple matter of great soil and proper timing. Those that are started indoors and later transplanted into the garden have the advantage of an earlier start, safe from the whims of spring weather, but this carries a risk. If their roots are constrained, just at the time they should be reaching out into the soil, the plants will be stunted and never as healthy or productive as they could otherwise be.

With cucurbits such as squash, cucumbers and melons, which are rapid growers, being held back in pots for longer than two or three weeks is especially injurious. Because they aren't planted until May, starting them now indoors would be a mistake. And with our long growing season, there's little advantage to starting them inside.

The crops most likely to be started ahead with good re-

sults are other heat-loving ones such as tomatoes, eggplants and peppers. With fruits at stake rather than just leaves, it's natural to want to hurry them along, but putting them in the ground before the soil has warmed will not hasten their growth, and confining them too long in small containers can be even worse. The tops will be leggy and the roots diminished.

**It's such an advantage if you start your own plants, provided you do it right**

You find this problem with seedlings that have waited too long at the garden center. You can try to tease apart their little plugs of white, matted roots, but the plants they become will win no prizes. That's why it's such an advantage to start your own, provided you time it right.

It pays to invest in a good collection of plastic pots that you can reuse every year. The ones I have are black, about five inches across at the top, and hold more than a quart of soil.

Many nurseries use them for potting perennial flowers and are often willing to sell you some. You or a friend might have a stash of them sitting in the garage or pot-

ting shed right now. They last for many years and stack easily for storage.

We use them for the trio of fruiting crops noted above and for artichoke plants, which we start even earlier. Because artichokes are biennials that bear the second year, we give them a few weeks of chilling once they are six weeks old, in an area safe from hard freezes, so that they think they've gone through their first winter and are ready to make those yummy buds. So it's essential that they have plenty of room to grow.

When transplanting these crops, it's important to encourage good root growth by digging a roomy hole in soil that's loose enough for good root penetration. A shovel with a scooped shape and a pointed tip works fine, but at our farm we've found an unexpected ally in the post hole digger. Grab it by its two handles, plunge it into the ground, and pull the handles in opposite directions. Lift the digger, and you'll see a hole wide and deep enough for the root ball of a plant knocked out of a pot up to six inches wide. Nestle it into the ground, and its roots are off and running.

Barbara Damrosch is the author of "The Four Season Farm Gardener's Cookbook"; her website is [www.fourseasonfarm.com](http://www.fourseasonfarm.com).



BDN FILE

It's not too early to talk about gardening. Seedlings require some special handling when transplanting. These are from a Master Gardeners' project at Eastport Elementary School in 2009.