

# Protecting state's coastline focus of partnership

American Press, John Guidroz, Jul 27, 2017

Two independent water research institutes recently joined forces in an effort to identify the best ways to protect the state's coastline, including the Southwest Louisiana region.

The Baton Rouge-based Water Institute of the Gulf signed a memorandum of understanding with the Netherlands-based Deltares. Rick Richard, vice chair of the water institute, attended the signing of the MOU in Delft, a city in the Netherlands, earlier this month. He was joined by officials with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, Deltares and the governor's office.

Richard said the water institute and Deltares have worked together on other projects since the institute was founded in 2011. But this new partnership will "have a lot of implications down the road," he said.

"This is a world-class MOU that puts us in the world category of working with Deltares with our laboratory," he said.

Richard said Deltares has researched water levels and waves on the North Sea. The sea has caused major flooding in the past, including a storm in 1953 that led to more than 1,800 deaths.

Maarten Smits, managing director of Deltares, said in a news release that Louisiana and the Netherlands have many similarities related to coastal issues.

"There is an acceleration of need for global expertise and innovations on water and subsoil," he said.

Richard said Southwest Louisiana's coastline deserves attention to make sure it doesn't fall victim to coastal erosion. He said flooding of area watersheds is another issue that could be addressed through the partnership.

"Water is ubiquitous; it's all around us," Richard said.

The Water Institute of the Gulf was founded with help from the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the state and former U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu.

It was created to inform and support the state's \$50 billion, 50-year coastal master plan. Richard said the institute was instrumental in aiding in the updated master plan that state lawmakers approved during last year's session.