#### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Source: esri

#### General

The United States of America (USA) is a federal republic composed of 50 states, a federal district, five major self-governing territories, and various possessions. The United States is the world's third- or fourth-largest country by total area and the third-most populous. Forty-eight states and the capital's federal district are contiguous and located in North America between Canada and Mexico. The state of Alaska is in the northwest corner of North America, bordered by Canada in the East and across the Bering Strait from Russia in the West. The state of Hawaii is an archipelago in the mid-Pacific Ocean. The U.S. territories are scattered about the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. The USA has

a total area of 983 Mha (million hectares) with, in 2022 a population of 338 million, or 0.34 persons per ha (Wikipedia and United Nations, 2022).

#### **Climate and geography**

The extremely diverse geography, climate, and wildlife of the United States make it one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries. The USA, with its large size and geographic variety, includes most climate types. To the East of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian, the climate ranges from humid continental in the North to humid subtropical in the South. The Great Plains west of the 100th meridian are semi-arid. The climate is arid in the Great Basin, desert in the Southwest, Mediterranean in coastal California, and oceanic in coastal Oregon, and Washington and southern Alaska. Most of Alaska is subarctic or polar. Hawaii and the southern tip of Florida are tropical, as are the populated territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific. Extreme weather is not uncommon - the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico are prone to hurricanes, and most of the world's tornadoes occur within the country, mainly in Tornado Alley areas in the Midwest and South (source: Wikipedia).

The coastal plain of the Atlantic seaboard gives way further inland to deciduous forests and the rolling hills of the Piedmont. The Appalachian Mountains and the Adirondack massif divide the eastern seaboard from the Great Lakes and the grasslands of the Midwest. The Mississippi–Missouri River, the world's fourth longest river system, runs mainly North–South through the heart of the country. The flat, fertile prairie of the Great Plains stretches to the West, interrupted by a highland region in the Southeast. The Rocky Mountains, west of the Great Plains, extend North to South across the country, peaking in Colorado. Farther West are the rocky Great Basin and deserts such as the Chihuahua, Sonoran, and Mojave. The Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountain ranges run close to the Pacific coast. The lowest and highest points in the contiguous United States are in the state of California. Active volcanoes are common throughout Alaska's Alexander and Aleutian Islands, and Hawaii consists of volcanic islands (source: Wikipedia).

Nesbit (1885) refers to successful impoldered lands in the tidal reach along Maurice River. In addition he mentions that around 1685 in Delaware tidal marshes were impoldered by Swedes. From Cape Henry to the Florida Keys there were polders with rice fields of the Carolinas and Georgia. These polders were not directly on the coast, but bordering the rivers far enough from the ocean to be exempt from high storm tides, and so situated that they could be flooded with fresh water from tributary streams. The upper limit was where the tidal action became insufficient for drainage through discharge sluices. He also refers to the successful polders along Puget Sound. Finally he mentions that the most important area of impoldered tidal marshes in the USA is in the Golden Gate area in California. He mentions several other tidal marshes where polders have been made, but doesn't specify very well where these areas are located. Therefore they could not be included in this overview.

The Centre for Civil Engineering Research and Codes (CUR) and Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (1993) state that the first low dikes along the Mississippi River were built along one bank around 1840. After 1880 the dike system was extended to both banks, and the dikes

were heightened. The result was a rise in the order of 2 m in the flood level. During the severe flood of 1927 dikes breached. In the period 1932-1942 the rise was compensated by the construction of cut-offs.

Roos and De Vries (2011) mention that in the Sacramento–San Joaquin delta in California about 120,000 ha is below mean sea level, protected by dikes, many on weak peat soil. The continuing sea level rise coupled with continued subsidence, will make it more difficult to protect low-lying delta lands from inundation. The biggest threat is during high water storm events, but also a few summer dry season breaks have affected endiked areas.

Olson and Morton (2016) describe that in the USA river floodplains, swamps, and forested bottomlands have been drained under the US Swamp Land Acts of 1849 to 1860.

In many of the polders in the USA there is significant subsidence. An example is shown by Nienhuis *et al.* (2017) in the subsidence map for coastal Louisiana (Figure 1).

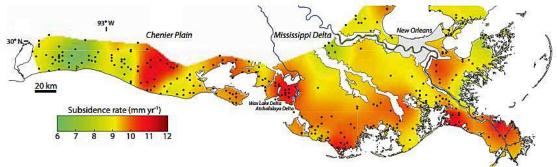


Figure 1. Subsidence map for coastal Louisiana (Nienhuis et al., 2017)

### **Existing polders**

The Group Polder Development (1982) states that millions of hectares have been endiked and drained for agriculture and settlement. This includes reclamation of bays and river beds. There are several hundred thousand hectares of agricultural land in polders below mean sea level, for example in the Sacramento Delta and the coastal lowlands of North Carolina. All the three types of polders – reclaimed low lying lands, lands gained on the sea and drained lakes - can be found in the USA:

- reclaimed low lying lands:
  - Florida:
    - + areas in the Everglades;
    - + Gumbo Island (40 ha);
  - \* *Louisiana and some other states*. Considerable areas have been endiked and managed for rice production;
  - \* *Lower Mississippi Valley*. Probably more than 400,000 ha of river bottom land has been endiked and reclaimed;
  - \* Massachusetts and Washington:
    - + extensive bays have been endiked and managed for cranberry culture;
    - + Wikipedia refers to new parts of Boston that would have been reclaimed between 1820 and 1900. It also refers to Back Bay in Boston (243 ha) that would have been reclaimed between 1857 and 1894. It is difficult to find out to what extend these are indeed polders;
  - \* *Minnesota*. Peat bays;
  - \* New Orleans and surrounding area, Louisiana. New Orleans consists to a large extent of polders. At the North and West side the area has to be protected against flooding by the Mississippi River. At the East and South side it has to be protected against flooding from the Carribean (Figure 2). The US Army Corps of Engineers publishes Polder Vertical Datum Reports. For the New Orleans District the Map is shown in Figure 3. To protect the city from flooding by the Mississippi River, among others, in 1931 the Bonnet Carré Spillway was constructed (Figure 4).

In 2005 a large area was flooded due to the hurricane Katrina through Lake Borgue and Lake Pontchartrain. Kok *et al.* (2006) show the polders in New Orleans that were flooded (Figure 5).

Kok *et al.* (2006) also show the dike (here called levees, as usual in the USA) system of New Orleans (Figure 6). A distinction is made in Mississippi dikes, hurricane dikes and secondary dikes.



Figure 2. New Orleans at the mouth of Mississippi River (source: Army Corps of Engineers)

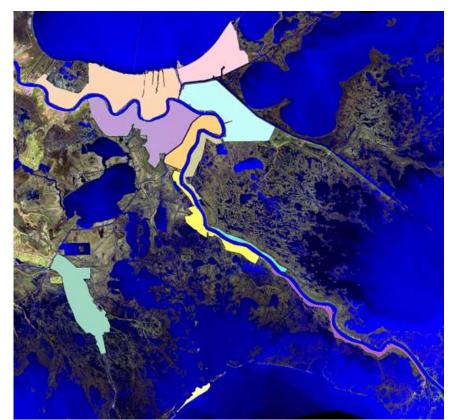


Figure 3. Polder areas in the New Orleans District (source: Army Corps of Engineers)



Figure 4. The Bonnet Carré Spillway 19 km upstream of New Orleans to divert flood water from Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain



*Figure 5. Polders (red encircled) – Orleans (1), Orleans East (2) and St. Bernard (3) - in New Orleans that were flooded due to the hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Kok et al., 2006)* 

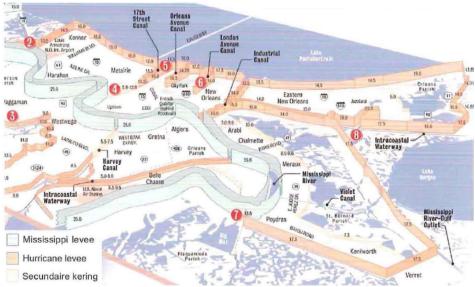


Figure 6. Dike system of New Orleans (Kok et al., 2006)

- \* *North Carolina*. More than 40,000 ha lowland peat areas around Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds;
- \* Sacramento San Joaquin Delta. Reclamation of islands was initiated at about 1850. By 1870 6,100 ha had been reclaimed. In 1960 the agricultural lands in the delta had a total area of 245,000 ha (Group Polder Development, 1982). Wikipedia refers to a reclamation period from 1900 till 1950 and a total reclaimed area of 202,100 ha. The Centre for Civil Engineering Research and Codes (CUR) and Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (1993) mention that these polders can be upto 4.5 m-MSL;
- \* *Texas.* Much of the land surrounding Houston, including residential areas and small towns;
- \* Washington. Samish flats 1,704 ha (4,210 acre) (Nesbit, 1885);
- lands gained on the sea:
  - \* California. Endiking and filling in San Fransisco Bay have reduced the area of the bay by about 50,000 ha (30%). This area has been reclaimed from open water, or marsh. Farm tracts bordered by the dikes are increasingly vulnerable to large-scale flooding as the land subsides and the dikes age and crumble (Group Polder Development, 1982). Wikipedia mentions that reclamation took place in the period 1900 1950 and that 86,670 ha has been reclaimed;
  - \* *Virginia*. The Group Polder Development (1982) mentions that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century many areas in the Chesapeake Bay have been reclaimed. However, many areas have been lost again due to erosion;
- drained lakes:
  - *North Carolina*. Lake Mattamuskeet (20,000 ha) was drained around 1915. Around 1930 the pumping was stopped and the area became a lake again. Now there are only some small polders at the borders of the lake (Group Polder Development, 1982).

General characteristics of the polders in the United States of America are shown in Table I. Table II shows the characteristics of the water management and flood protection systems of the existing polders.

#### **Proposed polders**

The Group Polder Development (1982) mentions that the Hackensack meadows in New Jersey can be reclaimed by means of closing the Hackensack River.

#### Location of the polders in United States of America as shown on the World polder map

The locations of the polders in United States of America are shown in Figure 7.



*Figure 7. Location of the polders in United States of America (source: esri – Batavialand)* 

The pictures by Prof. Adriaan Volker are shown in Table III. The pictures by Prof. Bart Schultz are shown in Table IV.

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Bart Schultz

Lelystad, May 2023

Name	Reclamation	Area in ha	Type *)	Latitudes	Longitudes	Elevation in m+MSL	Land use	
Existing polders								
Reclaimed low lying lands								
California								
Polders in Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta	1850-1960	245,000	RLL	38° 04' N	121° 43' W	-5	Agriculture	
Florida								
Areas in the Everglades			RLL	25° 46' N	80° 34' W			
Gumbo Island		40	RLL	26° 27' N	82° 04' W			
Louisiana and some other states								
Endiked areas			RLL				Rice	
Lower Mississippi Valley								
River bottom land		400,000	RLL					
Massachusetts and Washington								
Extensive bays			RLL				Granberry	
New parts of Boston			RLL	42° 22' N	71° 04' W			
Minnesota								
Peat bays			RLL					
New Orleans District								
Belle Chasse Polder			RLL	29° 52' N	89° 58' W	-6	Urban	
Caernarvon to Phoenix Polder			RLL	29° 48' N	89º 58' W	-9	Agriculture	
Grande Isle Polder			RLL	29º 14' N	89° 59' W	0	Rural	
Larose - Golden Meadow Polder			RLL	29° 27' N	90° 18' W	0	Rural	
New Orleans East Polder			RLL	30° 03' N	89° 50' W	-9	Urban	
Oakville to City Price Polder			RLL	29° 40' N	89° 58' W	0	Agriculture	
Phoenix to Bohemia Polder			RLL	29° 35' N	89° 49' W	0		
• Saint Charles - Jefferson - Orleans Metro Polder			RLL	30° 00' N	90° 11' W	-9	Urban	
St. Bernard Polder			RLL	29° 55' N	89° 52' W	-9	Urban	
• St. Jude to Venice Polder			RLL	29° 23' N	89° 36' W	1		
• Westwego - Harvey – Algiers Polder			RLL	29° 54' N	90° 12' W	-8	Urban	
North Carolina								
Areas around Albemarle			RLL	35° 21' N	80° 20' W			
Areas around Pamlico Sounds			RLL	35° 34' N	76° 03' W			
Sub-total		645,040						

# Table I. General characteristics of existing polders in USA

\*) RLL = reclaimed low-lying land; LGS = land gained on the sea; DL = drained lake

Name	Reclamation	Area in ha	Type *)	Latitudes	Longitudes	Elevation in m+MSL	Land use
			Reclaime	d low lying lands		1	
Sub-total previous page		645,040					
Texas							
Surroundings of Houston			RLL	29° 46' N	95° 22' W		Urban and rural
Washington							
Puget Sound		10,500	RLL				
Samish Flats		1,704	RLL	48° 22' N	122° 21' W	16	Agriculture
Sub-total		657,244					
			Land ga	ined on the sea			
California							
San Fransisco Bay	1900-1950	86,670	LGS	37° 41' N	122° 09' W		
Virginia							
Chesapeake Bay	1915-1930		LGS	38º 16' N	76° 07' W		
Sub-total		743,914					
			Dra	ained Lake			
North Carolina							
Lake Mattamuskeet		20,000	DL	35° 34' N	76° 05' W	1 m	
Total		763,914					
			Prop	osed polders			
New Jersey							
Hackensack meadows							

# Table I. General characteristics of existing polders in USA (continued)

\*) RLL = reclaimed low-lying land; LGS = land gained on the sea; DL = drained lake

	Design criteria in chance of occurrence/year   Water management Flood protection								
			Flood protection						
Name		1							
	Туре	Design	Percentage of		ge capacity	Irrigation	Rural	Urban	
California	21	criterion	open water	m <sup>3</sup> /s	mm/day				
Polders in Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta	RLL								
Florida	102								
Areas in the Everglades	RLL								
Gumbo Island	RLL								
Louisiana and some other states									
Endiked areas	RLL								
Lower Mississippi Valley									
River bottom land	RLL								
Massachusetts and Washington									
Extensive bays	RLL								
New parts of Boston	RLL								
Minnesota									
Peat bays	RLL								
New Orleans District									
Caernarvon to Phoenix Polder	RLL								
New Orleans East Polder	RLL								
St. Bernard Polder	RLL								
• Saint Charles - Jefferson - Orleans Metro Polder	RLL								
Westwego - Harvey – Algiers Polder	RLL						<100		
Belle Chasse Polder	RLL								
Oakville to City Price Polder	RLL								
Larose - Golden Meadow Polder	RLL								
Grande Isle Polder	RLL								
St. Jude to Venice Polder	RLL								
Phoenix to Bohemia Polder	RLL						<100		

Table II. Characteristics of the water management and flood protection system in USA

	Design criteria in chance of occurrence/year									
Name			Flood protection							
		-								
	Туре	Design criterion	Percentage of open water		ge capacity	Irrigation	Rural	Urban		
				m <sup>3</sup> /s	mm/day					
North Carolina										
Areas around Albemarle	RLL									
Areas around Pamlico Sounds	RLL									
Texas										
Surroundings of Houston	RLL									
Washington										
Puget Sound										
Samish Flats	RLL									
California										
San Fransisco Bay	LGS									
Virginia										
Chesapeake Bay	LGS									
North Carolina										
Lake Mattamuskeet	DL									

# Table II. Characteristics of the water management and flood protection system in USA (continued)

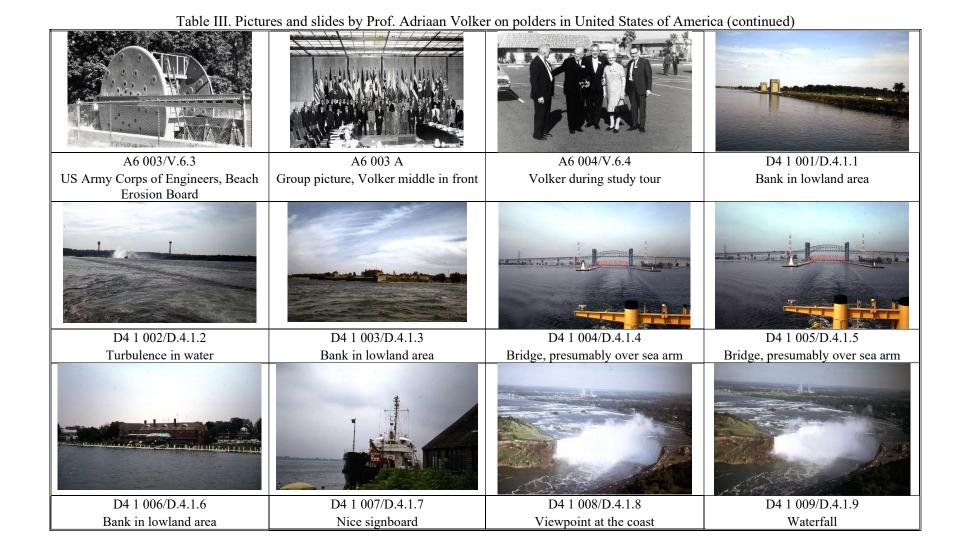


Table III. Pictures and slides by Prof. Adriaan Volker on polders in United States of America

\*) Batavialand/original



Table III. Pictures and slides by Prof. Adriaan Volker on polders in United States of America (continued)



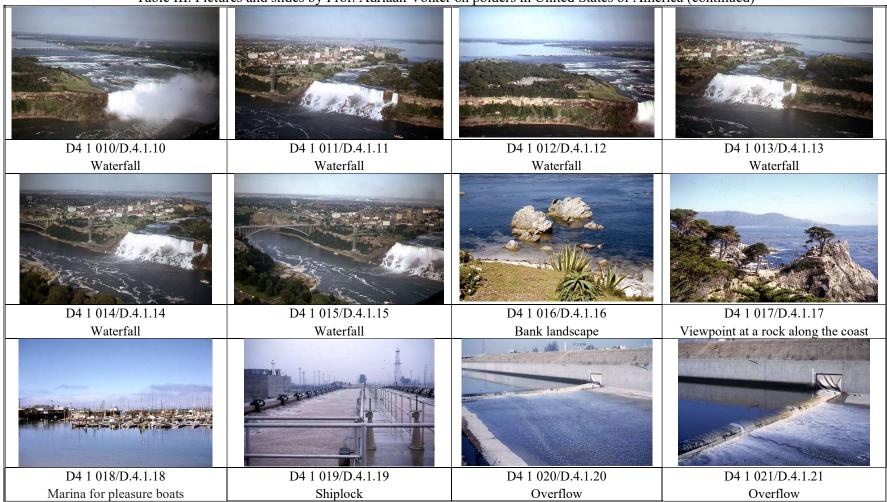


Table III. Pictures and slides by Prof. Adriaan Volker on polders in United States of America (continued)

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D4 1 022/D.4.1.22	D4 1 023/D.4.1.23	D4 1 024/D.4.1.24	D4 1 025/D.4.1.25
Niagara waterfalls	Niagara waterfalls	Niagara waterfalls	Niagara waterfalls
D4 1 026/D.4.1.26	D4 1 027/D.4.1.27	D4 1 028/D.4.1.28	D4 1 029/D.4.1.29
Gondola above the Niagara waterfalls	Bridge above the Niagara waterfalls	Niagara waterfalls	Manhattan, New York

Table III. Pictures and slides by Prof. Adriaan Volker on polders in United States of America (continued)



Table III. Pictures and slides by Prof. Adriaan Volker on polders in United States of America (continued)



Table IV. Pictures and slides by Prof. Bart Schultz on polders in United States of America

\*) Batavialand/original



Table IV. Pictures and slides by Prof. Bart Schultz on polders in United States of America (continued)

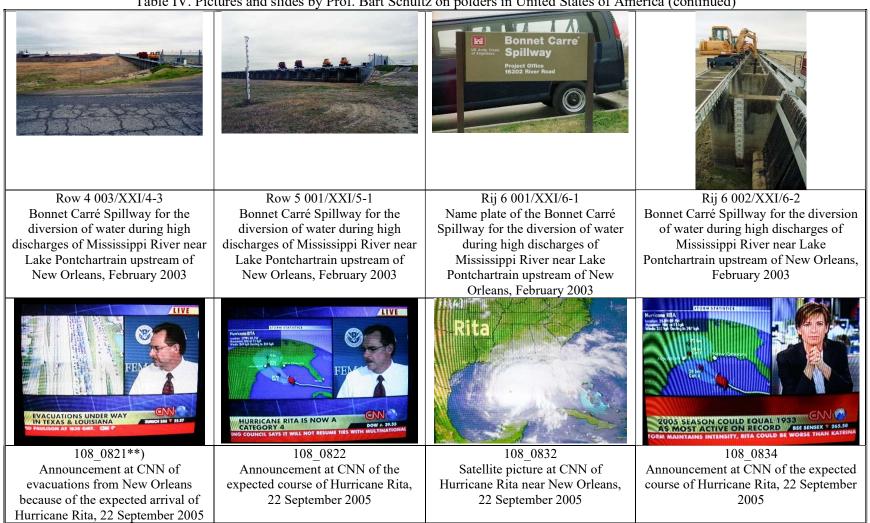


Table IV. Pictures and slides by Prof. Bart Schultz on polders in United States of America (continued)

\*\*) Original number



### Table IV. Pictures and slides by Prof. Bart Schultz on polders in United States of America (continued)

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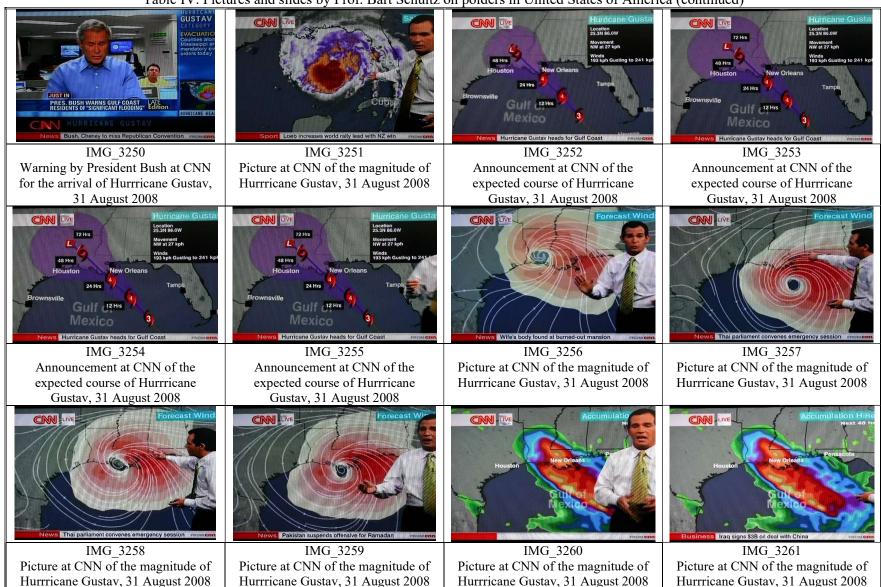


Table IV. Pictures and slides by Prof. Bart Schultz on polders in United States of America (continued)

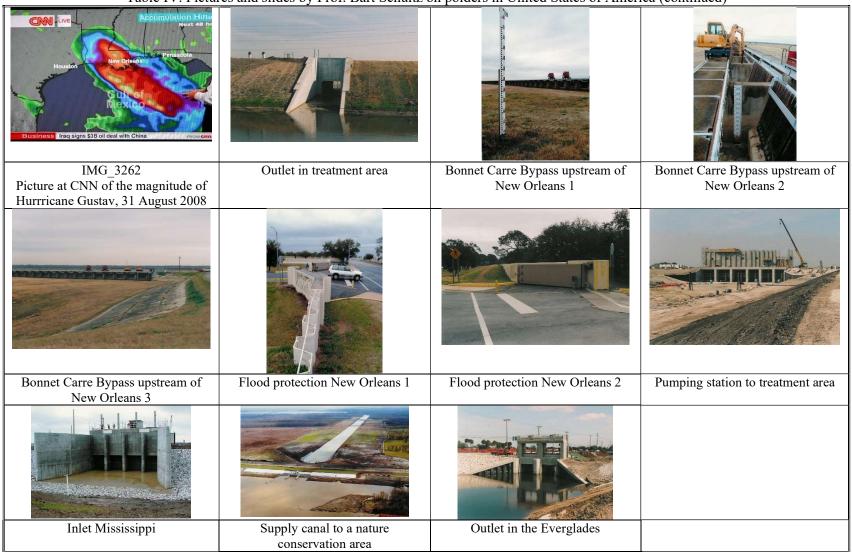


Table IV. Pictures and slides by Prof. Bart Schultz on polders in United States of America (continued)