

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Fall 1998

We'll Take the High Road



LA 1 North of Port Fourchon, Tropical Storm Josephine – October 1996

Labor Day weekend 1998 could have been tragic for South Louisiana. As thousands of residents planned trips to the coast for the long holiday, a tropical storm named Earl twirled about the Gulf of Mexico, baffling forecasters and aggravating locals with its rain, high winds and unpredictable path. Fortunately for this state, the strengthening storm turned east. Louisianians were spared the threat of a hurricane, and travelers to Grand Isle enjoyed another unbeatable holiday weekend on the water.

LA 1 did experience an impact from the nearby storm, however. For about a day and a half, a quarter of a mile of the

two-lane road between Fourchon and Grand Isle was covered with water.

One short week later, Tropical Storm Frances headed to Texas, but brought high tides and more than ten inches of rain to an already drenched south Louisiana. Once again, the highway near Leeville was covered for three days and the water threatened to make the route impassable. In addition, had powerful Hurricane Georges steered closer toward southeast Louisiana, it could have carried a strong enough storm surge and more than enough rain to top the Lafourche levee system. These

disturbances, experienced all within a month, easily demonstrate the danger any tidal change can pose to fragile LA 1, and the immediate need for an elevated highway in the region.

"The hurricane of 1893, which hit the area between Fourchon and Grand Isle, resulted in Louisiana's greatest loss of life from a natural disaster. Residents had no warning of the storm and no time to escape. Now, over one hundred years later, it's still difficult to get out in time, even with all of the warnings we have. Our infrastructure does not provide for an adequate and dependable evacuation route," says Windell Curole, Assistant Director of the Lafourche Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness and General Manager of the South Lafourche Levee District.

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Coalition's Efforts Supported by Local Newspapers

Over the past few months, the efforts of the LA 1 Coalition have received welcome support from our two local daily newspapers—Thibodaux's *Daily Comet* and *The Courier* of Houma. In various editorials and articles both publications have applauded Congress' action to set aside \$6 in the federal highway bill to begin an upgrade of LA 1 from U.S 90 to Port Fourchon. In the wake of an extremely active hurricane season, the newspapers have also stressed the need for a more dependable hurricane evacuation route for the area,

specifically a north-south corridor linking Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes with I-10.

"The need to expand LA 1 is undeniable. The physical and economic health of Americans depends on it," suggests a July 31 editorial in *The Courier*. "Louisiana congressional leaders have managed to secure the project's startup money. But they need the citizens' help convincing Washington politicians that the LA 1 improvements are of national importance."

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High Road

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According to authorities, LA 1 from Golden Meadow to Grand Isle suffers from a multitude of uncontrollable conditions that threaten the safety of local residents before, during and after a tropical storm or hurricane. To begin with, the loss of marshland and barrier island erosion have weakened and diminished the natural levees along Bayou Lafourche, causing settling of the land and of the highway. Further, any tidal change in the Gulf of Mexico, whether it is a tropical disturbance or a winter rainstorm, almost immediately results in highway flooding that can last from several hours to several days. Ultimately, this flooding further erodes the highway and makes this lone hurricane evacuation route risky and undependable. It can also seriously impede rescue and emergency response efforts following a direct hurricane hit in the area.

"Approximately 3,000 residents and 7,000 workers located south of the Leeville Bridge could be evacuated in a matter of six to seven hours if we have an adequate warning," Curole explains. "But you have to understand that the evacuation for these residents and workers is different than those living farther north from the coast. We have to get people out before the road begins to flood and they are trapped south of the levee protection system. This could happen many

hours before the actual storm hits. The challenge is further compounded when we have thousands of visitors in Grand Isle during tourist season."

LA 1 is perhaps its lowest at the foot of the Leeville Bridge, where water levels at a mere one foot above normal summertime tides will cover the road bed. And because it is not dependable, the Leeville Bridge poses the greatest threat to safety in Lafourche Parish, says Curole. He recalls the Fourth of July holiday of 1993 when Hurricane Alberto threatened the region and the bridge was closed to traffic for more than six hours. "If we would have had to evacuate the area, we may not have made it," he explains.

In his support of the LA 1 Coalition's push for infrastructure improvements, the levee district manager points to a 1955 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study, which concluded that an elevation of at least five feet above sea level was required to protect the highway from flooding. Since it would be impractical to rebuild the current road, Curole believes a new elevated highway between Golden Meadow and Port Fourchon is a necessity for the safety and economic stability of the area.

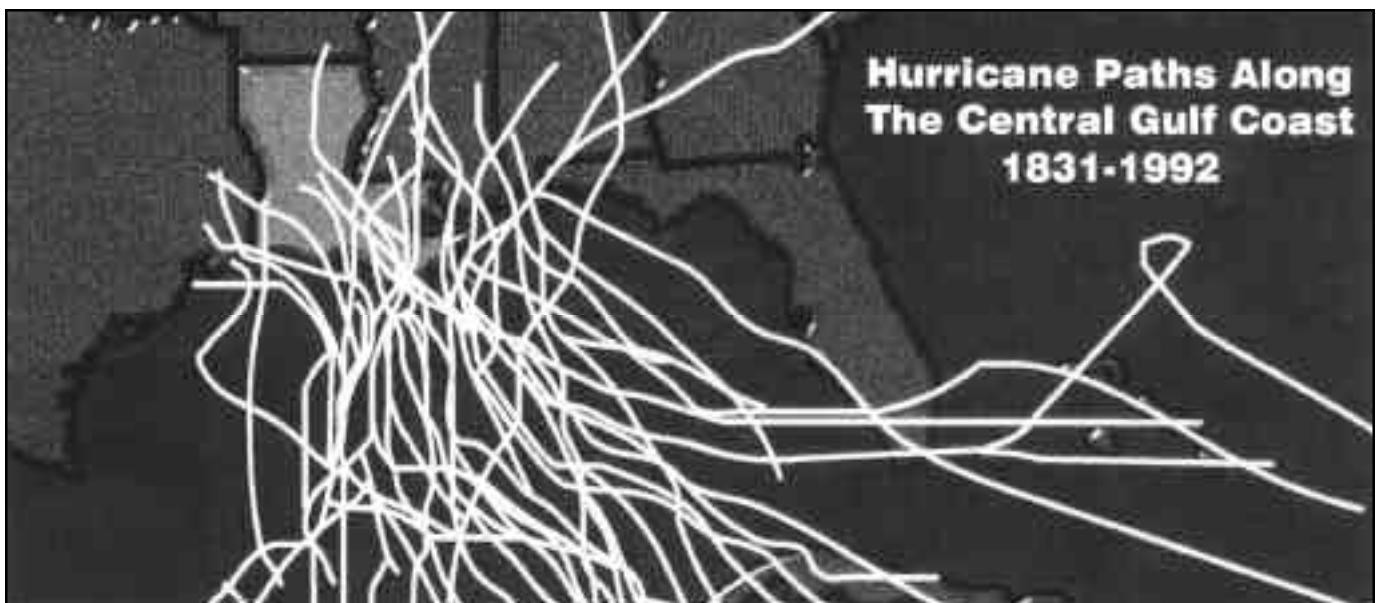
"Elevation is the salvation from inundation," he often argues, when discussing flood problems for roads, buildings and homes in the Barataria-

Terrebonne Basin.

The need for such a highway as a dependable hurricane evacuation route is one of the elements of the Coalition's efforts, a project that is estimated to cost over \$530 million. In speaking with federal transportation officials and congressmen, Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis says that, within the beltway, policy makers are sympathetic to the plight of south Louisiana with regard to hurricane evacuation, but it is tough to convince Congress to make this particular project a national priority. Therefore, the Coalition's campaign has focused on the economic importance of the region to the rest of the nation.

"Other areas need funding for economic development, but our development is already here. We need money for economic sustenance," Francis says. "A dependable La 1 allows us to harvest seafood and natural resources and respond to environmental emergencies. It also provides access to the tremendous opportunities offered by oil and gas and helps ensure the safety of the people who are performing all of these tasks, which have become significant economic assets for this state and the nation."

For more information about Lafourche Parish emergency preparedness activities or hurricane evacuation routes and procedures, contact the parish office at (504) 446-8427 in Thibodaux, or Windell Curole at the South Lafourche Levee District, (504) 632-7554.



The Central Gulf of Mexico and Southeast Louisiana have experienced the devastation of numerous hurricanes for decades. A dependable evacuation route for this area is crucial to ensure the safety of coastal residents.

Chairman's Report

-by Ted Falgout, Executive Director, Greater Lafourche Port Commission

In my last report, I stated, "NOW is the time for major oil and gas to partner with this Coalition." I am proud to say that this is NOW happening.

We have secured a commitment from oil and gas through their industry organization, Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association, for providing the local match to our federal TEA 21 funding. Their financial contribution will enable us to conduct the necessary studies required for building a new highway from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon. This major commitment from oil and gas

companies, which is expected to be approximately \$200,000, will enable us to move this extremely critical highway project at a pace never before experienced in this entire state.

Roy Francis and I have been meeting weekly with DOTD officials to expedite and iron out the details of this aggressive effort. The anticipated results will

"One for All and All for One."

advance this project by a minimum of two years and perhaps much more.

This commitment by oil and gas further strengthens our LA 1 Coalition and shows their support for this extraordinary effort. It adds new meaning to our slogan, "One for All and All for One."

Efforts Supported

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Speaking of money, the publications have also complimented the local oil and gas industry for offering to put up the state matching funds needed to get an environmental impact study moving. The study will focus on a proposed new four-lane road connecting Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon.

"The willingness of private business to chip in more than they already pay in taxes may put a more favorable light on such a project and hasten its development," explained an August 18 *Daily Comet* editorial.

Our success depends on public support. These local newspapers are vital in helping us effectively reach individuals and businesses, who can in turn, influence their lawmakers.

"Fair Share" Push Continues in Congress

High bids for outer-continental shelf (OCS) petroleum leases in the western Gulf of Mexico jumped sharply in September, although the lease sale offered less tracts and received less bids.

According to industry analysts, this indicates that deepwater drilling is still considered a long-term investment regardless of short-term oil prices. For those living and working in southeast

Louisiana, particularly in South Lafourche, the continued commitment to OCS not only translates to economic health, but to persistent strain on an eroding infrastructure—primarily LA 1.

A congressional campaign is now underway to give Louisiana and other Gulf states a greater share of OCS revenue, which could be used by these states for improving and maintaining infrastructure,

as well as for environment and wildlife conservation. During the past 45 years, the federal government has collected more than \$120 billion from oil and gas production off the coast of Louisiana, while the state has only received \$991 million, or less than one percent.

In the U.S Senate, Louisiana's Mary Landrieu and a bipartisan coalition have been active in formulating a fair share bill called the "Conservation and Reinvestment Act." Supporters include senators from around the country and leaders from both industry and the environmental community. Senator Landrieu plans to formally introduce her legislation in October.

On the House side, the LA 1 Coalition has received great support from Louisiana Congressmen Billy Tauzin, Chris John and Richard Baker, who have released a draft proposal called the "OCS Impact Assistance Plan." Under both legislative initiatives, coastal states like Louisiana—which accounts for 91 percent of all OCS production—would share half of the overall OCS revenues raised by the MMS.

Congress must know that we need and deserve compensation for the impacts on our highway. LA 1 Coalition urges you to contact lawmakers and ask them to support efforts to return a greater share of OCS revenue to Louisiana.

Highway Projects Update

PROJECT	STATUS
Embankment work on Hwy. 3235 (4-lane) from Hwy. 3161 to Hwy. 24	Underway / Completion: Dec. 1998
Pavement of Hwy. 3235 North to Hwy. 3161	Underway / Completion: Jan. 1999
Pavement of Hwy. 3235 from 69th Street to Hwy. 24	Contract to be let Aug. 1999 / Comp.: Sept. 2000
Leeville Bridge repairs	Underway / Completion: Spring 1999
Resurfacing of LA 308 south of Intracoastal Bridge	Contract to be let October 1999
Intracoastal Bridge Hwy. 1 maintenance work	Contract to be let March 1999
Hwy. 308 Lockport to Raceland overlay	Contract to be let Jan. 1999 / Comp.: Summer 1999
T-Bois Bridge replacement	Contract to be let Jan. 1999 / Comp.: app. 3 years
Mathews Bridge replacement	Contract to be let April 1999 / Comp.: app. 3 years
Overlay of 4-lane interchange at U.S. 90	Contract to be let June 1999
Hwy. 308 curve realignment south of Lockport	Contract to be let Oct. 1999
Bayou Lafourche bridge replacement at Larose	Contract to be let in 2001 / Comp.: app. 3 years
Rock Armoring of LA1 south of Golden Meadow	Contract to be let in 1st quarter 1999



LA 1 COALITION MEMBERS

As of September 30, 1998

GOLD SPONSORS (\$10,000 or more)

Bollinger Shipyards, Inc.
Cenac Environmental Services, Inc.
Danos & Curole, Inc.
Edison Chouest Offshore, LLC
Grand Isle Shipyard, Inc.
Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Houma Armature Works & Supply, Inc.
Lafourche Parish Council
Louisiana Offshore Oil Port, LLC
Orgeron Properties, LLC
SJI, Inc.
Sureway Supermarket, Inc.
T. Baker Smith & Son, Inc.
Venture Transport, Inc.
Welch Sales & Service, Inc.

SILVER SPONSORS (\$5,000 or more)

Deramee & Pitre, LLP
Entergy Louisiana
Golden Lane Marine, Inc.
John W. Stone Oil Dist., LLC
L & M Botruc Rentals, Inc.
Martin Terminal, Inc.
L & L Oil Company, Inc.

BRONZE SPONSORS (\$1,000 or more)

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Barriere Construction Co.
Bilco Tools, Inc.
Breux Petro. Products, Inc.
Buckner Rental Services, Inc.
C & G Boats, Inc.
Caillouet Land Corporation
Cajun Trucking, Inc.
CanDo, Inc.
Constantin Land Trust
Coastal Environments, Inc.
Crosby Tugs, Inc.
Deepwater Port Services, Inc.
Doucet & Adams, Inc.
Edward Wisner Donation Advisory Cmte.
Francis Drilling Fluids, Ltd.
G & A Barge Rental & Const., Inc.
Gilbert Cheramie Boats, Inc.
Grand Isle Port Commission
J. Wayne Plaisance, Inc.
Lady of the Sea General Hospital
Larry Picciola, Inc.
Lower Lafourche Development, LLC
Magnum Mud Equipment Co., Inc.
Morgan City Rentals

Morris P. Hebert, Inc.
Ocean Marine Operators, LLC
Picciola & Associates, Inc.
Pointe Fourchon, Inc.
Ronald Adams Contractor, Inc.
South Lafourche Bank & Trust
South Lafourche Levee District
Superior Shipyard Fab., Inc.
Terrebonne Motor Co., Inc.
Tetra Oil & Gas Services, Inc.
Theriot, Duet & Theriot, Inc.

ASSOCIATE SPONSORS (up to \$1,000)

ANS Engines, Inc.
Bayou Civic Club
Bayou Chemical & Supply, Inc.
Delta Testing & Inspection, Inc.
Hibernia National Bank
Legislative Support Group
Landry House Bed and Breakfast
Regions Bank
Rousse Marine, Inc.
Southern Scrap Recycling, LLC
State Bank & Trust Company
Suard Barge Service, Inc.

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Industry Insights

Why is LA 1 important? It is our only over-land link to the following valuable natural resources:

- The **Central Planning Area** dominates Gulf of Mexico OCS production. During 1993, this area produced **93 percent** of the Gulf's oil and **73 percent** of its gas production.
- Oil production from the Gulf of Mexico has been forecast to increase in the range of **50 to 75 percent** between 1996 and 2000, or at a rate of 10 to 15 percent per year.
- Federal lands offshore Louisiana generate more gas and oil revenue from

OCS leases than leases offshore of any other state. Since 1954, federal lands offshore Louisiana have been the source of **65 percent** of total OCS mineral revenue.

•Recent rig locator reports indicate that Port Fourchon services at least **two-thirds** of deepwater activity in the Central Planning Area and **one-third** of deepwater activity in the Western Planning Area. OCS activities will continue to have a significant impact on infrastructure in South Lafourche.

• The Gulf of Mexico has the most extensive network of offshore oil and gas pipelines in the world, stretching over **20,000 miles**.

•Between 1993 and 1995, the number of pipeline right-of-way and installation applications increased by more than **20 percent**.

For Your Information...

If you would like to receive additional copies of "One to One" or more information on the LA 1 Coalition, call Roy Francis, Executive Director, at (504) 448-4485 or write to us at P.O. Box 2048-NSU, Thibodaux, LA 70310. Our office is located on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA, within the offices of the South Louisiana Economic Council. The LA 1 Coalition is a non-profit 501-c4 corporation.