

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Summer 1999

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words

Congressional Tour Offers Up-Close Look at Impacts of Oil and Gas Activity



For the past few years, local residents have urged Washington lawmakers to visit south Louisiana to see, first hand, the impacts of offshore activity on our fragile coastline. This spring, several Congressmen took us up on the offer, traveling to the Louisiana coast as part of a field hearing for the House Natural Resources Committee.

On May 1, the LA 1 Coalition was proud to take part in a helicopter tour conducted along the south Louisiana coast for Representatives Peter DeFazio of Oregon and Tom Udall of New Mexico, both members of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee. The lawmakers viewed the state's endangered coastal wetlands, highlighted by a stop at Chevron Oil's massive Main Pass platform just outside the mouth of the Mississippi River and flights over ongoing wetlands restoration projects.

The group also visited Port Fourchon, where they were treated to fresh boiled shrimp and crawfish. After lunch, LA 1 Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout, South Lafourche Levee District's Wendell Curole, Clifford Smith and LSU's Don Davis discussed the state of Louisiana's dwindling coastline, the hurricane threat and the impacts sustained by LA 1 and the highway's importance to local residents and industry at Port Fourchon.

The tour coincided with a hearing conducted by members of the House Natural Resources committee on May 3 in New Orleans, focusing on legislation

dealing with the redistribution of Outer Continental Shelf royalty revenue. At least three different OCS bills are now making their way through the legislative process—HR 701 (Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999) co-authored by Reps. Billy Tauzin and Chris John,

“Only when they see the land loss and the road conditions can they really appreciate the impacts we are experiencing...”

Roy Francis

HR 798 (Permanent Protection for America's Resources) by Rep. George Miller (CA) and S25 (“Fair Share” bill) co-authored by Sen. Mary Landrieu. Each would distribute a greater amount of OCS revenue from the federal government to the states, with some proposals offering greater shares to states like Louisiana with greater oil and gas activity off their coasts.

Governor Mike Foster was the first of many Louisiana leaders to testify at the committee hearing.



Wendell Curole explains South Louisiana's oil spill response plan to visiting congressmen.

“The nation receives billions of dollars in revenues at great cost to Louisiana's coastal towns and cities, our people and its unique culture,” the Governor said, urging Congress to share more of the royalty wealth with states that bear the greatest environmental and infrastructure burdens while providing the entire country with a valuable energy supply. This message was echoed by Falgout, whose testimony followed the governor's.

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LA 1 Coalition members and Lafourche Parish leaders welcomed Congressmen Peter DeFazio and Tom Udall to Port Fourchon on May 1.

Photos courtesy of Randolph Publications

New Council Targets Coastal Impact Assistance



Amidst the debate on OCS revenue, a new group has emerged to fight for Louisiana's and other coastal states' share of billions of dollars in federal oil and gas royalties.

The Coastal Impact Assistance & Reinvestment Council was created this spring by Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Jack Caldwell to bring together government agencies and non-profit organizations concerned with garnering federal funds to mitigate impacts of OCS activities off their states' coasts.

LA 1 Coalition is a charter member of the group, along with the Greater Lafourche Port Commission and coastal parishes like Terrebonne, Lafourche, Vermillion, Plaquemines and St. Bernard.

"Just about every parish that has a direct stake in the future of our coastline has joined the new council. This kind of interest and involvement will be a big boost in spreading our message to law-

makers here, in Washington and across the country," remarked LA 1 Coalition Ted Falgout.

Falgout was elected Chairman of the Coastal Impact Assistance &

The effort of the council at this time will be encouraging the federal government to provide a "fair share" of its offshore mineral revenue to impacted coastal states.

Reinvestment Council during an organizational meeting in Baton Rouge June 24. Caldwell serves as President.

The non-profit organization's only effort at this time will be encouraging the federal government to provide a "fair share" of offshore mineral revenue to coastal states that bear the greatest environment and infrastructure burdens of the industry.

"By pooling our resources, council members can provide the greatest possible presence in Washington in an effort to win the share of royalty revenues that we think this state and other coastal, oil-pro-

ducing states deserve," Falgout continued.

The Coastal Impact Assistance & Reinvestment Council may also serve as a forum for members to discuss and debate questions of coastal impacts, as well as promote coastal and land/water policies that stimulate and improve ongoing coastal resource, land and water conservation and restoration efforts by members.

While the new group was chartered in Baton Rouge, membership is open to interested parties in coastal, oil and gas producing states throughout the country.

Coalition Leaders Travel to Washington to Court Uncommitted Senators

LA 1 Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout and Executive Director Roy Francis traveled to Washington in early June, hoping to sway senators who have not yet said they would support OCS revenue sharing proposals.

"We met with staff members for seven different senators who we perceive as being 'on the fence' when it comes to the OCS revenue bills now making their way through Congress," Roy explained.

"Ted and I discussed the level of activity and related impacts Louisiana is experiencing due to offshore production and our need for funding to mitigate these impacts. I think we conveyed the LA 1 message loud and clear, and it was well received by the staffers we met with. Now, we'll have to wait and see if the case we presented sways them to our side of the fence when it comes to OCS legislation," he said.

Francis and Falgout met with staff representing the following U.S. Senators: Sen. Jack Reed, Rhode Island; Sen. Susan Collins, Maine; Sens. Joseph Lieberman and Chris Dodd, Connecticut; Sen. Patty Murray, Washington; Sen. Gordon Smith, Oregon; and Sen. Paul Sarbanes, Maryland.

They also discussed pending OCS legislation and what the revenue could mean to Louisiana with representatives of the Sierra Club, Gulf Restoration Network, Minerals Management Service, and the Coastal State Organization.

Task Force Prepares Final Recommendations for LA 1 Improvements

By the end of the summer, a final report of recommendations for LA 1 improvements should be on Governor Mike Foster's desk—a report that recognizes the southernmost portion of the state highway as critically in need of upgrades.

Since last fall, members of the Louisiana Highway One Project Task Force have been studying the condition of the highway system from Grand Isle to Alexandria and have developed recommendations for improving or upgrading to 4-lane status much of the well-traveled route.

Task force member Roy Francis says that the group will recommend dividing the proposed highway project area into four segments and, when and where feasible, tackling the southernmost segment from Grand Isle/Port Fourchon to U.S. 90 first. One of the two critical links identified by the task

force—the Leeville Bridge—is located in this first segment, with the second critical link being a connector road between LA Hwy. 3127 and the Mississippi River Bridge in Gramercy.

The task force is also recommending that the life of the group be extended another year, pending the progress of federal OCS legislation. "If a favorable OCS revenue bill gets Congressional approval, it could provide funds that we need to get the proposed road improvements going," Francis said.

In addition to Francis, Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout and members Charlotte Bollinger, Billy Coyle and Roger White also serve on the 23-member task force.



Chairman's Report



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



If one of this Coalition's goals is to heighten awareness of impacts experienced by LA 1, we are definitely making progress. Never before have so many issues of critical importance to south Louisiana, namely coastal restoration and infrastructure improvements, gained such a high level of recognition by decision makers in Congress and the White House.

In fact, one of the most publicized legislative initiatives today is one that speaks directly to the needs of our area—the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999 (CARA). Passage of this act would create a mechanism for the federal government to share revenue from offshore oil and gas leases with coastal states, enabling these states to deal with the impacts of industry activity.

Currently, this money, estimated to be \$4.59 billion in the year 2000, goes directly into the U.S. Treasury and none of it is set aside for dealing with the consequences of this federal activity on states that provide land support. In fact, the Port Commission and the LA 1

Coalition has long felt that the federal government was not properly documenting the impacts of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) activity on states like Louisiana and central service points like Port Fourchon, much less mitigating these impact.

Fortunately, it appears, the tide is turning. For the first time, the policy

Urge others to join the growing effort to get Louisiana its fair share of OCS revenues.

committee of the MMS is now recommending a sharing of offshore revenues with coastal states. In addition, several bills, including HR 701(CARA) co-authored by our own congressmen Billy Tauzin and Chris John, and Senate Bill 25 by Senator Mary Landrieu, are now moving through Congress as part of the OCS revenue effort.

These bills would dedicate more than \$1 billion annually to protect fish, wildlife and coastal wetlands, and mitigate the impacts of OCS activity on coastal infrastructure like LA Highway 1. Louisiana's share expected share of these funds could be as much as \$347 million in the year

2000 alone, a level of funding necessary if we are to make meaningful improvements to our coast line and our infrastructure.

We do have a lot of work ahead of us, however. At least one other OCS proposal does not specifically address impact areas and would distribute money to all states according to formulas not helpful to Louisiana.

We must keep our story on the front page and put forth an all-out effort for favorable legislation—it is our best chance to get the funding we need to mitigate our impacted infrastructure. We must convince congressmen from states like Idaho and Illinois that coastal Louisiana is a national treasure worth saving. The LA 1 Coalition is fully committed to supporting this governmental relations effort and will continue to provide information to help others understand the critical issues that we face.

Every citizen of Louisiana should seize every opportunity available to show their support for this legislation and urge others to join the growing effort to get Louisiana its fair share of OCS revenues.

Our future is at stake.



Congressional Tour

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Clifford Smith, president of T. Baker Smith & Son, Inc. of Houma and a LA 1 Coalition member, also testified as to Louisiana's commitment toward coastal restoration. According to Smith, the state has spent \$170 million of its own money on coastal restoration projects in this decade alone.

To LA 1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis, local tours and hearings like these are very effective ways to get the Coalition's message across. "We can meet with lawmakers in Washington day after day to discuss the impacts on our infrastructure and environment. But only when they see the land loss and the road conditions can they really appreciate the impacts we are experiencing and why funding improvements are so critical," he says.



In his presentation, Clifford Smith discussed the impact of the Mississippi River levee system on South Louisiana's coastal erosion.

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As of June 30, 1999

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Project Updates

- URS Greiner has begun the **feasibility study** for LA 1 upgrades from Larose to relocated U.S. 90. The study includes analysis of need, potential alignment, right-of-ways, cost and impacts. It is being funded by appropriations from the 1998 federal TEA-21 bill and a state government match.
- DOTD and Mike Baker Engineers have agreed on the scope of services for the **Environmental Impact Statement** covering LA 1 improvements from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon. Work begins in July. The EIS has been put on a fast track thanks to private funding from members of Mid Continent Oil and Gas.

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.