

ONE to ONE

An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition

Winter 2000

HR 701 Clears House Committee

Redistribution of OCS Revenue Bodes Well for Louisiana



Every now and then, Congressional legislation comes around that really gets us excited. If this fall's action by a House Resources Committee is any indication, the year 2000 will be a very exciting one for the LA 1 Coalition and all those concerned about the oil and gas industry's impact on local infrastructure.

On November 10, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999 (HR 701) cleared the House panel, paving the way for redistribution of \$3 billion of outer-continental shelf (OCS) royalties paid by

drilling companies each year. As part of the legislation co-authored by La. Congressman Billy Tauzin, every state would stand to gain a piece of the OCS pie, with coastal states like Texas, Louisiana and Alaska receiving the greatest amounts to mitigate environmental, wildlife and infrastructure impacts of the industry. Passage of the

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- Roy Francis

legislation has been a big focus of the LA 1 Coalition this year.

"The committee's action was a

critical first step for us, especially since it happened before Congress recessed for the holidays," explains Executive Director Roy Francis who was present at the bill's markup in committee. "We will now increase our efforts at informing the entire House membership before debate on the House floor this year, as well as in the Senate where a similar OCS bill by Senator Mary Landrieu awaits committee consideration."

While exact figures cannot be confirmed, estimates of Louisiana's share of OCS revenue under HR 701 stand at about \$250 million per year. In the year 2000 alone, the federal government is expected to collect approximately \$4.6 billion in OCS drilling royalties.

Success Extends Life of LA 1 Coalition Another Year

Three years ago, when a group of area business leaders sat down to discuss infrastructure needs and funding alternatives, the LA 1 Coalition was born. The founders set out to make state and national policymakers aware of the growing oil and gas activity supported by Port Fourchon and the bayou region

in an effort to garner money for related road projects. Today, with nearly \$6 million in dedicated federal funds, a state highway task force, viable OCS revenue sharing legislation and key support from major oil and gas partners, the Coalition is barking up the tree of success.

For these reasons, the Coalition Executive Committee voted in November to extend the previous 3-year life of the group.

"We are way ahead of where any of

us thought we would be at this point," explained Executive Committee member Loulan Pitre. "We agreed at the beginning that we would not give up for three years. Have we achieved enough to make this effort worth continuing? The answer is definitely yes."

And the Coalition's challenge is definitely not over. The strong push continues for a new Leeville Bridge, a new road from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon, and road improvements to U.S. 90.

Task Force Issues Final Report

The Louisiana Highway 1 Project Task Force submitted their final report to Governor Mike Foster on October 26, 1999, a report that recommends significant highway upgrades for the road from Grand Isle/Port Fourchon to U.S. 90. The 22-member panel appointed a year ago by the Governor was charged with evaluating the condition of LA 1 from Grand Isle to Alexandria, and studying the need and feasibility of road upgrades.

Among the report's recommendations, as reported in the last issue of "One to One," is a call for dividing the 240-mile highway into four potential work sections and prioritizing these sections from south to north. Considering such factors as proximity to the coast, alternative routes, accident rates, economic impacts and hurricane evacuation, task force members ranked the lowest portion of the highway, from Grand Isle/Port Fourchon to U.S. 90, as the one section generally in most need of immediate attention.

The report also identified the Leeville bridge and a connector road between the Gramercy/Wallace

Mississippi River bridge and LA. Hwy. 3127 as critical links in the safe, efficient movement of traffic along the southern area of LA 1. Other road upgrades, like resurfacing and shoulder work, were suggested for the northern section of the road up to Alexandria.

Coalition Chairman Ted Falgout, Executive Director Roy Francis, members Charlotte Bollinger, Billy Coyle and Roger White, as well as Terrebonne Parish President Bobby Bergeron, SCIA Director Otis Logue, Bubba Townsend and Jake Giardina serve on the task force chaired by Mitch Theriot. The group expects to continue their work for another year, specifically to monitor federal OCS legislation and the impacts that it may have on funding for highway improvements, as well as the upcoming state legislative session.

Copies of the final report are available at the LA 1 Coalition office.



LA 1 Evacuation Plan Included in FEMA Budget

Hurricane evacuation has been a constant concern for residents of south Louisiana, particularly among those relying on LA 1 as their only means of traveling north during a hurricane threat. Thanks to Congressman Billy Tauzin, we may soon get a helping hand from FEMA in developing a comprehensive hurricane evacuation plan.

In the latest budget for the federal emergency management agency, Congress has included a requirement to work with the LA 1 Coalition in developing the evacuation plan for the region. Hopes are to have a meaningful plan in place before another serious storm threatens South Louisiana.

Road Work in Progress



Travelers along the southern portion of LA 1 will notice a significant improvement to the highway in this new year. Contractors have been busy paving new shoulders for the highway from the Golden Meadow corp. limits south 4.8 miles. According to Davie Breaux of the Greater Lafourche Port Commission, the \$410,000 project was funded by the state DOTD with money acquired by the port commission for essential road improvements.

Chairman's Report



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

Where do we go from here?

It hardly seems possible that three years have already gone by since we first started the LA 1 Coalition. When we formed this organization, we established a well-defined goal, to "promote highway improvements between Grand Isle and U.S. 90." Our plan was to, within three years, establish an awareness of our highway needs, identify and pursue sources of funding and place ourselves in a position to quickly respond if we are successful in receiving any funds for highway improvements.

It's my pleasure to report to you that we have accomplished these very aggressive tasks in record time. In order to really appreciate these accomplishments, we need to put them in proper perspective with similar projects. After all, we are talking about highway projects, which are usually measured in decades rather than months. Look at U.S. 90 taking 60 years and the four-lane LA 1 bypass from Golden Meadow to Larose taking 30 years. Believe me, we are spinning some heads with our fast track project.

In less than three years, we have made the LA 1 project a household word and not just in Lafourche Parish, but all over the state and country. With landmark legislation being heard in Washington, we hear people from all over the country asking, "What is this LA 1 Project?" It's the one Louisiana infrastructure project with which they are familiar. Like Senator Rappelet used to say, "It doesn't matter if they're talking good or bad about you, just so they're talking." And believe me, they're talking.

We've not only made everyone aware of our needs, we've prepared the support information to back up what we say. We have literally "put our money

where our mouth is." We have prepared our own publications, gotten the U.S. Minerals Management Service to document the OCS impacts in three separate publications, and have gotten the state to mirror our concerns through the LA 1 Task Force. We also have an EIS from Golden Meadow to Port Fourchon and a feasibility study from Larose to U.S. 90 ongoing.

We have infiltrated the ranks at every level of state and federal government to the point that they call us for information rather than us calling them. We are as informed as the specialists on every program or issue that is even remotely related to our cause, and we are specifically mentioned in every initiative that relates to our cause, even at the federal level.

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One of the most recent examples is a Congressional Report on Emergency Planning and Assistance. In this House committee report, FEMA is directed to work with the LA 1 Coalition on the preparation of an evacuation and recovery plan and report.

This just doesn't happen on its own. It takes a plan, a group to push it and a close working relationship with our congressional delegation. Simply put, we're on the radar screen, and I'm excited about the almost unbelievable progress we have made with this extremely critical project and the rapid pace we have set.

And they say, "Imitation is the highest form of flattery." Other worthwhile initiatives are using the LA 1 Coalition as the benchmark for success at pursuing

infrastructure projects and wanting to form similar coalitions.

I think we've come a long way in a short time, but we still have a heck of a long and bumpy road ahead of us. Our experimental effort that started three years ago has yielded more fruit than ever imagined, but we are at a cross roads.

At our recent general membership meeting, several questions were posed to those in attendance. Where to go with this effort? Do we back off and let it run its course, or do we continue to apply our time and money in an effort to secure and expedite funding? The membership, without question, agreed with the recommendation of the Executive Committee that our accomplishments are exceptional and we should push on and continue the Coalition into the new millennium.

In closing, I want to emphasize that this has not been a one or two man show. It has taken a coalition of interested people to be successful. Your Executive Committee, of which I have had the privilege to chair, has been extremely active. Those members are Hank Danos, Joe Leonard, Loulan Pitre and Roger White. And finally, it is ever so clear that the Coalition made the right choice when it chose Roy Francis to lead our effort. Roy has done an exceptional job as our Executive Director and our long list of accomplishments reflects his capabilities and relentless effort to achieve our goals and objectives. I sincerely believe we have never been in a better position to achieve meaningful highway improvements for our area in record time.



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PORT SUBMITS PROPOSAL FOR BRIDGE

On behalf of the LA 1 Coalition, the Greater Lafourche Port Commission has submitted a \$48 million capital outlay proposal to Commissioner of Administration Mark Drennan for a new Leeville Bridge. Rep. Loulan Pitre, a member of the Coalition's Executive Committee, has pledged to support this request. It is important to note, says Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis, that the administration and legislature receive about \$1 billion in such requests annually, and yet only sell about \$200 million in bonds a year. We'll keep you posted on any action taken on this capital outlay request.

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.