

# ONE to ONE

*An Update on the Efforts of the LA 1 Coalition*

**Fall 2005**

[www.LA1Coalition.org](http://www.LA1Coalition.org) • e-mail: [info@LA1Coalition.org](mailto:info@LA1Coalition.org)

## ***Help Is On the Way***

Additional funding for the LA 1 Highway Improvement Project may be put on a fast-track through Congress as part of a comprehensive \$32 billion proposal by Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco and Department of Transportation and Development Secretary Johnny Bradberry to improve and construct critical highways, bridges, levees and hurricane protection systems in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Blanco presented the plan to President George W. Bush during his visit to Louisiana on September 25, a day after Rita made landfall along the Louisiana/Texas border. The proposal includes \$120 million toward construction of a new, fixed-level Leeville Bridge and \$15 million to replace the Caminada Bay Bridge near Grand Isle. Existing funding from the TIFIA loan, federal transportation bill and bond proceeds will fund remaining segments of phase one of the LA 1 project, including the six-mile elevated highway from Leeville to Port Fourchon.

*On August 30, one day after Hurricane Katrina made landfall east of Grand Isle, the Leeville Bridge looked like a bridge to nowhere, with LA 1 north and south of the bridge inundated by tidal flooding. As proposed in a \$32 billion state plan, federal money would be immediately allocated to replace the Leeville Bridge and complete substantial portions of the LA 1 project.*



*Portions of LA 1 were underwater again on September 23 and 24 as Hurricane Rita's southeast winds pushed water inland, closing down America's Energy Corridor. Clearing of and repairs to the highway allowed critical deliveries to Port Fourchon to resume at 2 pm on September 25th. Erosion caused by Katrina and Rita has left the road more susceptible to rising waters.*

*See more storm-related photos at [www.la1coalition.org](http://www.la1coalition.org).*

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## Boulet Proud to Lead Coalition as Executive Director



Henri Boulet has always called Lafourche Parish home, even when his mailing address included such cities as Worcester, Massachusetts, and Innsbruck, Austria. Likewise, his love for the area and his respect for the value this region provides to the entire country has never waned. That's one of the reasons this

Larose native was so excited to get to work as the new Executive Director of the LA 1 Coalition on September 12.

"The LA 1 Coalition and director Roy Francis, have done a fantastic job making our national leaders aware of the critical role LA 1 plays in our national energy supply and securing financing for the first phase of construction," Boulet says. "I look forward to keeping this momentum going and witnessing the construction and eventual completion of the highway improvement project."

Before joining the LA 1 Coalition, Boulet worked as director of business development for the Greater Lafourche Port Commission. He served eight years as Executive Director of the Bayou Civic Club operating the Larose Regional Park & Civic Center, and two years as Community Development Coordinator for the Houma-Terrebonne Arts & Humanities Council. He and wife Rochelle live in Larose with their two children.

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**"I look forward to keeping this momentum going and witnessing the construction and eventual completion of the highway improvement project."**

- LA 1 Coalition Director Henri Boulet

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"The Coalition has made tremendous progress over the past several years under Roy's leadership, and we are confident that Henri will be an effective leader as we expand our focus from financing and public support to monitoring construction of the project's first phase," Falgout said when announcing Henri's appointment. "Henri brings with him a wealth of experience that qualifies him for this extremely important position. I encourage all of our members to give him the support he needs to carry out the mission of our Coalition."

Francis, who led the organization since 1997, resigned to accept a job with a local oilfield fabrication company.

"I want to thank all of my friends and associates who have made my job with the Coalition so rewarding. I continue to believe the effort is one of national importance and plan to support Henri and the Coalition in any way that I can over the upcoming months and years," he said.

Boulet works in the LA 1 Coalition office located in the South Louisiana Economic Council building on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux. He can be reached by phone at (985) 448-4485 or by e-mail at [henri.boulet@nicholls.edu](mailto:henri.boulet@nicholls.edu)

## PROJECT UPDATES:

- Bids based on revised specifications for construction of Phase I of the LA 1 Improvement Project are expected to be let by LA DOTD in December and January, according to Project Manager David Miller. Plans are still being worked out, but the first phase could be divided into three smaller sections to reduce project costs. Original bids opened in June were nearly \$100 million over budget.
- Prime contractors looking to bid on the LA 1 Improvement Project are encouraged to visit a new web site supported by the LA 1 Coalition. The site, [www.buildla1.com](http://www.buildla1.com), was launched in September and features lists of local businesses that could provide key services like employee housing, catering, and machine and equipment rental, as well as information on water supply, Port Fourchon, local government and schools. To list your business on the web site, e-mail us at [info@buildla1.com](mailto:info@buildla1.com).
- Hurricane Katrina and other storms since the spring appear to have impacted the Leeville Bridge below the surface. DOTD inspections following Katrina revealed that scouring from the tropical weather systems has washed away most of the five-foot rock base placed at the foot of the bridge pilings last year. According to DOTD's David Miller, the bridge remains in stable condition, but will be monitored often.



## REMEMBERING AL BANKSTON, LA 1 SUPPORTER

Al Bankston recognized the importance of LA 1, not only for the critical role it plays in the nation's energy supply, but also as the only highway route to the fertile fishing paradise of South Lafourche and Grand Isle.

When he passed away this past spring at age 69, LA 1 lost one of its earliest champions, the LA 1 Coalition lost one of its active supporters, and people who knew him throughout south Louisiana lost a dear friend.

A Baton Rouge-area resident, Bankston owned and operated Baton Rouge Printing and developed Pointe Fouchon, a recreational/residential community along LA 1 near Port Fourchon where he spent much of his leisure time. He joined the LA 1 Coalition in its infancy and remained firmly committed to the highway improvement project over the years. The LA 1 Coalition extends its sympathies to the entire Bankston family.



# Local Hearings Bring National Attention to LA 1



*U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons of Nevada (left) and U.S. Rep. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana (right) listen to testimony during a field oversight hearing at Port Fourchon on August 13.*

Only days before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita wreaked havoc on south Louisiana, local officials warned federal lawmakers about the catastrophic impacts of coastal erosion and hurricanes on the region during two committee hearings conducted at Port Fourchon and in New Orleans. The hearings put a spotlight on the critical support Port Fourchon and LA 1 provide to the nation's energy supply, a lesson that would be realized by Americans everywhere as the days unfolded.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works held a field hearing in New Orleans on August 26 to examine the causes, effects and proposed solutions to Louisiana's coastal erosion crisis. La 1 Coalition Executive Director Roy Francis testified alongside Lafourche Parish President Charlotte Randolph.

"LA 1 is only three feet above sea level and is subject to eight-foot to ten-foot storm surges," Francis said. "The highway provides access for 6,000 offshore workers and their equipment to support 75 percent of federal OCS deepwater activities in the Gulf of Mexico."

On Saturday, August 13, members of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a Field Oversight Hearing on "The Benefits of Offshore Oil and Gas Development" at the Port Fourchon Operations Center.

Two LA 1 Coalition Executive Board Members, Chairman Ted Falgout and Treasurer Hank Danos, testified before U.S. Rep. Jim Gibbons, R. Nev., U.S. Rep. Bobby Jindal, R. Metairie, and congressional staffers of subcommittee member U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon, D. Napoleonville, who could not attend due to an emergency appendectomy.

"Much of the support infrastructure for nearly one-third of this country's oil and gas supply is located in the most rapidly deteriorating and vulnerable areas of Louisiana's coast," explained Falgout. "Unless something is done to protect coastal Louisiana and its critical oil and gas infrastructure, this country is on a collision course with an unprecedented energy shortage."

The hearing provided Coalition and Port Fourchon officials an opportunity to take the Congressmen on a tour of the port and to stress the need for a more equitable share of royalty revenue for Louisiana.



## Chairman's Report

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

### When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Going!

This well-used phrase truly depicts the situation we find ourselves in, when describing our actions in relation to the very tough weather events we have recently experienced. It is difficult enough to achieve our very ambitious and aggressive goal of improving LA1 under normal circumstances, but to be impacted by two once-in-a-lifetime hurricanes in the same month can strain even the mightiest of efforts.

I am pleased to tell you that we have not let these tropical events diminish our resolve to pursue our goal of an improved LA1. If anything, it has strengthened our commitment and realization of the need. Hopefully, it has opened the eyes of many who did not believe or refused to accept

the relationship of this critical corridor to the nation's energy supply.

When the docudrama "Oil Storm" was released earlier this year, many felt it was

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a bit farfetched to have Port Fourchon inoperable and the Houston Ship Channel blocked at the same time. They could not fathom the gasoline lines and unheard of prices depicted in the story.

Let me tell you, if each of these storms would have gone just a little farther west, those naysayers would have been calling

the producer a "prophet."

Hopefully, the "Silver Linings" out of these storms is that the relationship of this area to the nation's energy supply is better understood, and that the money allocated to Louisiana for recovery is spent on coastal restoration and infrastructure improvements that set the stage for long-term protection and sustained economic development for Louisiana.

History tells me that it is no "given" that we spend this money wisely. Shame on us if we sit idly by and don't engage ourselves in the process that will ultimately determine how this money will be spent. It's truly a time for the "tough to get going" and provide the necessary leadership.

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**THANK YOU!** If you have any  
comments or suggestions about any item in the  
newsletter, please call us at (985) 448-4485.

## ***Coalition Membership Luncheon*** ***Slated for October 19***



The LA 1 Coalition invites all of its members to attend the organization's annual membership meeting scheduled for **Wednesday, October 19, 2005** beginning at noon at the **Larose Civic Center**. The luncheon's guest speaker will be Louisiana DOTD Secretary Johnny Bradberry who will provide a state update on the LA 1 Highway Improvement Project.

"We have made tremendous progress over the past year in our efforts to secure funding for this critical energy corridor, and we have also met some significant challenges," says Falgout. "It is important for all of our members who have supported us over the years to be fully aware of where this project is now and where it is headed."

There is no fee for the luncheon, however reservations are requested by noon on Wednesday, October 12. Reservations can be made by calling (985) 448-4485 or e-mailing Executive Director Henri Boulet at [henri.boulet@nicholls.edu](mailto:henri.boulet@nicholls.edu).

## **For Your Information...**

If you would like to receive additional copies of "One to One" or more information on the LA 1 Coalition, call Henri Boulet, Executive Director, at (985) 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.

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