

December 20, 2007

Governor-elect Bobby Jindal  
Coastal Restoration and Hurricane Protection Transition Council  
Submitted by Daniel J. Walker, President, Morganza Action Coalition

*Supporting & Expediting the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project  
for the Terrebonne and Lafourche Region*

*Terrebonne-Lafourche Economic Hub*

Located 60 miles southwest of New Orleans, the Terrebonne & Lafourche region is home to over 200,000 people and is considered the apex of energy production for the nation. Terrebonne & Lafourche Parishes are strategically located along Louisiana's coast to host local, national, and international companies which service 30% of this nation's oil and gas supply. In addition, these companies support the nation's most critical energy port – Port Fourchon.

While supporting oil and gas, refining, pipeline and maritime industries, the Houma metropolitan region is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the state and posted the highest job-growth percentage of any of the state's other metropolitan areas at 3.5%. This region has the lowest unemployment rate in the state at 2% and its personal income growth rate of 17.7% in 2006 is one of the nation's highest among metropolitan areas. This is compared to the national average of 5.4%.

Over 9,300 miles of pipelines are protected by our wetlands. The pipelines that run from the Louisiana Offshore Oil Platform (LOOP) through our wetlands are connected to 50% of the nation's refining capacity. Through these pipelines, we supply the lifeblood of this nation. Our wetlands are the most bountiful in the nation; supplying up to 35 % of America's seafood and playing an integral role in North America's migratory bird flyway. The coastal region of Terrebonne & Lafourche is the MOST valuable coast to this State and this Nation.

*Current Status – NO Hurricane Protection*

In 2005, Terrebonne Parish received the 1-2 punch for hurricanes – Hurricane Katrina & Hurricane Rita. We experienced the greatest flooding of all time due to Hurricane Rita that made landfall nearly 200 miles away. Hurricane Rita's storm surge inundated over 10,000 homes and businesses in Terrebonne Parish resulting in \$75 million dollars worth of damage.

Our region experiences the highest rates of coastal land loss in the world at approximately 10 square miles per year and yet we have NO hurricane protection system. A future direct hit will likely annihilate the Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish region, potentially killing thousands of people, destroying homes and businesses along the way, and crippling the oil and gas infrastructure here so severely that gas prices will skyrocket beyond currently shocking levels.

*Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project*

Our future, the state's future and the nation's future depends on a proposed levee system called the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project ("Morganza")

Morganza is a proposed \$888 million hurricane protection project to protect parts of Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes from the damages caused by hurricane storm surges. With 72 miles of levees and designed as a 100 year hurricane protection system, it will protect a population exceeding 200,000 from a Category 3 storm.

Morganza is a *first-of-its-kind* in that it incorporates floodgates and environmental structures that will allow water to flow between the interior and exterior marshes. This levee system works *with* the wetlands and will provide an opportunity to *improve* the existing hydrology and *maximize* ecosystem sustainability.

Morganza has undergone 15 years of analysis, including public input and federally required Environmental Impact Statements. In addition, prior to building each section of Morganza, its design is further evaluated using the latest science and engineering data available. Modifications that are deemed feasible are made to each segment of the alignment based on each individual evaluation. In other words, Morganza's design is *not* a pre-Katrina design; it is a post-Katrina design as it takes into consideration all of the lessons learned from hurricane Katrina.

The wetlands throughout the Barataria and Terrebonne basins are already disintegrating and Morganza's environmental features will provide an opportunity to replenish and enhance the wetlands by distributing freshwater throughout the starved system. Any suggestions to move Morganza's alignment further inland will require additional studies and will further delay this much needed project. Additional delays will put communities and critical infrastructure at risk and will allow for further deterioration of our wetlands. Those of us who live in Terrebonne Parish fully understand that we do not have another 15 years to study a hurricane protection project. It is time to move forward and build it.

*Expediting Morganza - A Potential "Pilot Project"*

Morganza was included in the State's 2007 Comprehensive Master Plan and it was just recently authorized in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act. To date, the Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District has been proactive in using available state and local funding for building portions of the levee system, designing the Houma Navigation Canal lock complex, and coordinating storm surge models with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The local tax has raised approximately \$25 million over the past five years which has been used to begin building 12 miles of levees at a total cost of \$54 million. Morganza is under construction without any federal dollars; however, our fight for federal funding is critical in expediting and completing this project.

We urge Governor-elect Jindal and the new administration to support Morganza and assist us in our efforts to fund and expedite its construction. A major hurricane is imminent and without proper protection, south Louisiana's economic hub will be devastated beyond our imagination. The cost to rebuild this region could potentially send major oil and gas and maritime industries elsewhere, thus impacting the entire state of Louisiana.

Expediting Morganza is essential; however, current circumstances within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) are hindering its progress. In addition, the Administration has requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to re-evaluate Morganza which will take a minimum of two years and \$2 million. This re-evaluation is a threat to the region's survival and therefore we urge the State to adamantly request that the Corps proceed with the construction of the Houma Navigation Canal (HNC) Lock, as this component is critical to flood protection and coastal restoration. Concurrently, we urge the State to take an innovative approach in implementing a major hurricane protection project and regard it as the first ever "pilot project" for the State's coastal program. In doing so, the State should request that the federal government allocate the project's federal funding to the local sponsors and allow the local sponsors to design, engineer and build the project while the Corps serves as an oversight authority.

Thank you for considering our issues and we look forward to working with you in the upcoming years.

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