

## MORGANZA ACTION COALITION

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### *Local delegation travels to Washington D.C. for Morganza Project*

A local delegation from Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes traveled to Washington D.C. this week to make one final pitch for the Morganza to the Gulf levee project before the President takes action to either veto or sign the recently passed Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill.

Senator Landrieu initially set up a meeting for local officials to meet with Senate Majority leader Harry Reid (D-NV) prior to WRDA's Senate vote this week. The original intent of the meeting was to lobby for the Senate's WRDA vote; however, since WRDA passed 81-12 in the Senate on Monday, the local delegation took the opportunity to thank the Senate majority leader and to re-emphasize the importance of WRDA to the bayou region.

In addition to Senator Reid, Senators Landrieu and Boxer (C-CA) were also present, as well as Senator Durbin's staffers. According to local officials, the meeting turned out to be a veto-strategy meeting.

The local delegation included Jerome Zeringue, Executive Director, Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District, Daniel J. Walker, President, Morganza Action Coalition; Senator Reggie Dupre, Representative Damon Baldone; Representative Gordon Dove; Stephen Smith, T. Baker Smith & Son, Inc.; Chet Morrison, Chet Morrison Contractors, Inc.; Dawn Lopez, Chet Morrison Contractors, Inc.; Oneil P. Malbrough, Shaw Coastal Inc.; Windell Curole, Director, South Lafourche Levee District, and Ronald Callais, South Lafourche Levee District.

Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection project is an \$888 million levee system that will protect approximately 200,000 residents in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. It has been pending a WRDA authorization since 2000 as Congress has not passed a WRDA bill in seven years. The President has threatened to veto the WRDA bill and he has ten days to do such. Local advocates are hoping that the President does not veto the bill; however, if he does, it is likely that Congress will override the veto. Once Morganza is authorized, it will be eligible for annual federal appropriations.

"We greatly appreciate our Congressional delegation, especially Senators Landrieu and Vitter and Congressman Melancon for their tenacity on this extremely important bill," stated Zeringue. "We are closer than we have ever been and we are hopeful that if the President vetoes the bill, a Congressional override will follow."

"Any opportunity that we have to inform members of Congress about the importance of Morganza is critical in making this project a reality for our region," stated Daniel J. Walker, President of the local Morganza Action Coalition.

The local group also spoke to members of Congress about various options for implementing coastal protection projects, particularly with more local control. As it works now, the federal government controls the construction of levee projects; whereas, officials cited how the majority of other federal programs, such as highway construction, distribute federal funds to local agencies which are then responsible for implementing the programs. Local advocates believe this approach would streamline and expedite the construction of local levee projects.