

**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
October 20, 2005**

The Larose to Golden Meadow Hurricane Protection System was authorized in 1965, is 98% complete and was the only flood protection system south of the Intracoastal Waterway which did not flood.

Due to lack of funding the South Lafourche Levee District has constructed the last two levee contracts. A lock which was cited in the original corps study is now under construction and is totally funded by the locals who are counter to the intent of Congress in 1965 and 1999. This situation occurred because of the loss of focus. This is reflected in the larger picture where local, state and federal governments had lost focus of the core threats to South Louisiana and what it provides for the United States.

Our system is constructed only to the 100 years storm which is a strong category 2. Yet over the last 20 years we have easily averted the over \$110,000,000 of damages which it cost to construct. It has also been the safe retreat for people and businesses which work at Port Fourchon. Port Fourchon is located 20 miles closer to the Gulf supporting about 75% of all deep offshore oil production in the Gulf of Mexico. The only deep offshore oil port in the country is located 40 miles south of our hurricane system, but it depends on our hurricane protection system and its critical base of operations.

The question is whether New Orleans and South Louisiana is still as important to the United States as when President Jefferson bought it in 1803. The platform that is South Louisiana is the Blue Collar Coast. It is a working coast; it is not condos and hotels on the beach.

Yet, with all it's exploitation it is still environmentally the most productive expanse of wetlands outside of Alaska. Five storms hit Florida over the last two hurricane seasons and out of Florida the economic repercussions are hardly noticeable. Two storms hit Louisiana and oil, trade and seafood are affected worldwide. Before we decide what to rebuild and not rebuild, we must ask why we invest so much money in other places which produce very little or considerably less than South Louisiana

To accomplish the goals of a comprehensive plan, a commission similar in structure to the Pelican Commission is necessary. It should have one employee responsible for integrating the projects, but with the power to convene any group germane to the goal of reestablishing and protecting South Louisiana.

The following are areas of need identified several years ago:

1. Protect evacuation routes with a hurricane levee system or flood proofing.
2. Plan for freshwater and sediment diversion projects to regain natural protection

- from storm surges.
3. Coordinate on-going flood studies by the Corps of Engineers and others. State and local officials should decide when and where the flood protection should be directed.
 4. Consolidate finances through local, state and federal funds. The state has to focus on tidal flooding along with its river flooding responsibilities.
 5. Keep the public informed of the threat a hurricane poses to them and their property.
 6. Increase level of already constructed hurricane protection levees to category 4 or 5 standards.
 7. Plan for internal drainage from the upper reaches of the drainage basin to the barrier islands.
 - a. Gravity drainage through water control structures in the hurricane levee
 - b. Interior drainage levees
 - c. Pump systems
 - c. Channel improvements
 8. Protection of infrastructure (highways, navigation channels)
 9. Stress elevation in construction of buildings through education not regulation.

The most dependable way to protect from all types of flooding (river, rainfall, or hurricane) is constructing buildings with as high an elevation as possible.