

**PRESENTED TO:
MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION, MORGAN CITY, LA
AUGUST 24, 2007**

**STATEMENT BY
SOUTH LAFOURCHE LEVEE DISTRICT**

The South Lafourche Levee District has continually tried to provide improved flood protection for the communities of South Lafourche. We are the local sponsor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Larose to Golden Meadow Hurricane Protection System.

The third emergency supplemental budget was to complete all authorized hurricane protection levees. With hundreds of millions of dollars going to the New Orleans area levees, only \$4 million was directed to the Larose to Golden Meadow project. This money was to be used on two (2) segments of levee in order to complete the 1965 authorization. The money has been exhausted on the construction of one and the planning of the other. Now we must use money at a 70/30 match. This is not a bad situation except that billions of 100% federal levee construction dollars have gone to the New Orleans area, not only to complete the 1965 authorization, but to build better than the 1965 authorization. There is no doubt about the needs in the New Orleans area.

But there does seem to be a doubt about dealing with the needs in our area. Lack of funding for the Larose to Golden Meadow project and lack of authorization for the Morganza to the Gulf are actions which speak to the Federal attention to our area.

With a population of 200,000 and 2.4% unemployment, these two parishes have economic vigor which deserves attention. With shipbuilding and fabrication, and seafood and oil industry support, this strong economy can continue only with the needed flood protection infrastructure.

Actions by the federal government have made the construction of flood protection harder to accomplish. Some of the obstacles have been inadvertent, but nonetheless, have become hurdles.

Simply by spending billions in New Orleans, the price of building our projects have increased tremendously everywhere. New Orleans area prices

have increased, but they have the federal funds. This area has the increases without the funds.

The people of South Lafourche voted a one cent sales tax because of the lack of federal revenue. This is above the already imposed 9.88 millage on property. The ability of the Levee District to build levees with its own money is delayed due to demands by the Corps to analyze the work. The Corps is not analyzing the work in a timely fashion because it is concentrating on the money and flood needs of the New Orleans area.

Due to more stringent criteria in levee construction, the material and the cost to build will deny needed flood protection. Pre-Katrina levees were constructed with the intent that it would strengthen with time. Post Katrina criteria demands instant strength which is beyond a reasonable cost for the local's share.

This will lead to less flood protection, not better flood protection. If flood protection is necessary today, a weak levee is better than no levee. This is acceptable as long as the people depending on the levee know the risk.

We understand that the Corps and federal government are under extreme pressure. Outside experts are pressing for the best levees possible, irrelevant of affordability. Building criteria is leaning more toward avoiding lawsuits rather than avoiding flooding. But our job is to prevent flooding of our communities. It is our foremost concern and everything else pails in comparison.

Although I realize you do not have the luxury of being as committed as our Board to our flood protection, and that the issues I have outlined are out of your control, our hope is that by facing these problems, we can improve the situation.

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