

Press Release



Levee Grass Root Efforts

For Immediate Release – June 18, 2009

Parish President Billy Nungesser toured all the levees in Plaquemines Parish last Saturday with Blair Rittner, head of the land Department, and Carroll Martin. Martin worked for the parish for more than 30 years in the levee department and has come back on as a consultant for the parish under the Nungesser Administration.

One of the main levee concerns has been the inability of the Army Corps of Engineers to grow grass on the West Bank levees from Port Sulphur south. The dirt used to build those levees after Katrina has a high salt content. President Nungesser demanded the Corps work to get grass on the levees prior to the height of the 2009 hurricane season.

“We are proud to say the Corps finally stepped up to the plate and several weeks ago began hauling top soil from the Bonnet Carre Spillway to top off these levees and plant grass in an effort to get strong growth for the peak of hurricane season,” said Nungesser. “We would not accept these levees as they were, with deep ruts and continued run-offs. I apologize to the residents who had mud slide into their backyards over the last three years. We’re sorry it took so long in fighting with the Corps to get these levees to the condition they should have been after Katrina. We will continue to monitor these levees, for progress and to ensure the grass grows.”

The Army Corps now has a project underway to increase grass coverage along the back levees from Empire to Venice.

In addition to the west bank levee work, the parish also stationed water trucks at day break Sunday morning on the East Bank levees where repairs were recently made. Parish officials noticed, during the current drought, some of the grass which had not taken root was beginning to die.

“In an effort to keep the grass alive, we dispatched trucks to water that grass and make sure it’s fully grown,” said Nungesser. He also thanked parish employees who gave up their Saturday and Sunday to help with these projects.

State and federal agencies joined Plaquemines Parish employees and embarked on an annual levee inspection tour on the West Bank. A dozen vehicles rode the back levee system starting at St. Jude Road and traveling south to Venice.

The agencies involved were the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), the state Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Plaquemines Parish Land Department, the parish Heavy Equipment Department, and the parish’s Coastal Zone Management.

The officials inspected the general condition of the levees and noted all deficiencies.

“Plaquemines Parish employees take great pride in the levees. This was my first levee tour,” said Parish Media Specialist Kurt Fromherz. “I didn’t realize how much time and effort went into each and every detail--from the rocks on the backside to the shells on the top--in maintaining these levees and the burms around them. It gave me a new appreciation for what the parish employees do to keep these levees up.”

The Corps of Engineers and the state inspect every flood protection levee during the months of April, May, and June; they inspect the Mississippi River Levee System and Atchafalaya Basin each fall.

