

## **STATE OF THE PARISH**

**As of November, 2007**

**Parish President Billy Nungesser**

Every day there is progress in the recovery and rebirth of Plaquemines Parish. Some days, there are simply baby steps, other days, greater improvements. But regardless of the pace, we remain focused and diligent on the task at hand, and that is to bring our people home and our parish back. I would like to outline a number of the accomplishments and initiatives I have undertaken since taking office in January of 2007. This has been a team effort and I want to thank all of our hard working parish employees and those fine contractors who are aiding us in our rebuilding task.

### **RECOVERY**

The previous administration faced a monumental job after Hurricane Katrina. They had to deal with the immediate emergency and identify a multitude of rebuilding and clean-up projects eligible for FEMA reimbursement. Upon taking office, there was approximately \$77 million dollars in FEMA projects identified for Plaquemines Parish. The previous administration did a fine job moving the ball to this point. It was my job to then take that ball and move it further down field. My team has now more than doubled the funding for FEMA reimbursable recovery projects to over \$200 million. Those projects include everything from canal and pump station improvements to the rebuilding of the Buras Water Tower and the Point a La Hache Marina. Here is a breakdown of our progress on FEMA recovery projects:

- Increased FEMA funding for recovery projects from \$77 million to over \$200 million.
- We have successfully lobbied FEMA for funding for projects that were previously denied or funded at lesser rates. For instance, FEMA had refused to pay for drain and catch basin cleaning. We challenged that determination and were successful in obtaining \$480,000 to clean these drains and basins, an important tool in helping prepare our parish for future storm events.
- Plaquemines Parish was also successful in receiving full funding for what is called 'Alternative Projects'. While these projects are not considered as vital as levees or pumping stations, they are important to the quality of life and the efficient operation of our parish. These Alternative Projects include the re-location of vulnerable parish buildings and assets and even recreation facilities such as ball fields. Initially FEMA agreed to pay just 75% of the cost for these projects, but we successfully convinced FEMA to fund 100% of these essential projects through a re-categorizing process. This re-classification alone increases funding to Plaquemines Parish by millions of dollars.

- We are currently challenging FEMA's insistence that the clean-up of debris outside of the Hurricane Protection levees is ineligible for re-imburement by FEMA. We believe this is an oversight that must be corrected. Not only is this debris unsightly, but is preventing some landowners from returning to their homes and rebuilding the way they want.

### **Here's a sample of the progress on several important projects:**

#### **I. Buras Boat Harbor Phase I**

- New hoist and ramp nearing completion
- Anticipated construction in December 2007
- Anticipated completion May 2008

#### **II. Venice Boat Harbor Phase II (Marina)**

- Design currently complete
- Construction to begin when Corps permit is received
- Anticipated completion 4 months after construction begins

#### **III. Port Sulphur Government Complex**

- Original allocation of \$750,000 for repairs
- Now \$4 million allocation for complete rebuild
- Anticipated completion January 2009

## **COASTAL RESTORATION**

### **State Funding**

\$23 Million dollars has been allocated for Coastal Restoration projects in the state and Plaquemines Parish including \$1.5 million to raise the road by Conoco Phillips and avoid the need for sandbagging in heavy rains.

### **Federal Funding**

The Coastal Wetlands Protection Restoration Authority has awarded nearly \$60 million dollars to four important coastal restoration projects for Plaquemines Parish.

- 1) Bohemia-Mississippi River Introduction Project: An extension of the Nesta Canal that will create 640 acres of new marshlands. Projected Cost= \$6,923,792.00
- 2) Caernarvon Outfall Management/Lake Lery Shoreline Protection: Creates 652 Acres of new marshlands, benefits 10,899 of existing marsh. Projected Cost= \$25,137,149.00

- 3) West Pointe-ala-Hache Marsh Creation: Creates 203 acres of new marsh, benefits 352 acres of existing marsh. Projected Cost= \$16,136,639.00
- 4) Bayou Dupont Marsh & Ridge Creation: Creates nearly 500 acres of new marsh And 17 acres of ridge. Projected Cost= \$21,626,767.00

A fifth project, the Pass a Loutre dredging project was not funded. However, we are confident that this important project will be funded next year.

### **History in the Making**

Never before has Plaquemines received such large amounts of capital from Baton Rouge and/or the federal government. It is a testament to the hard work of your new parish council, administration, parish employees and an unparalleled regional cooperation that acknowledges the importance of Plaquemines Parish to the entire State of Louisiana and the country. As the number one producer of oil and gas for the state we will continue to demand our fair share for the protection and safety of our parish.

## **COST SAVINGS**

While our parish is in the midst of a very costly recovery, it is imperative that we remain cognizant of every dollar that is spent in the parish. To that end, I have instituted some cost saving measures that will ensure we are spending your tax dollars as efficiently as possible.

### **ROAD MAINTENANCE**

In an effort to speed up the progress on drainage and road projects, we have undertaken a new road maintenance agreement. Instead of going out to bid and waiting for this lengthy process to conclude for each and every project, no matter how small, we now have the ability to quickly proceed through the use of one umbrella contract. Using set guidelines and pre-established prices, many street and drainage repairs no longer have to be bid out-this saves time and money. Now, there will be no over-designing and no over-repairing. In most cases, simple measurements can be taken, and the work begins. The list for road repairs is long. And many repairs have been on the books for years and had been overlooked. We are re-evaluating this process and working to update the list to make sure that no roads are left out of the process...especially the ones that are important to you!

### **Gas Cards**

Parish employees who drive parish vehicles on a daily basis have now been issued gas cards. This will provide a paper trail that does not currently exist with regard to our gas expenditures. It will help crack down on abuse by allowing us to monitor usage by employees in addition to keeping track of their on-the-job status. Additionally, employees will spend less time filling out paperwork and more time

doing their job assignments. This management and control tool will translate into almost immediate savings.

## **GPS Systems**

Global Positioning devices are being installed in parish vehicles to help keep track of their location for improved security and efficiency. This will allow each department to better monitor their employees, making sure they are where they are supposed to be. And, in times of crisis, the GPS systems will help the parish better utilize our resources with quicker response times based on the exact location of personnel and vehicles.

## **FUTURE PROJECTS**

### **POSITIONING PLAQUEMINES PORT**

Almost immediately upon taking office, we signed an historic agreement with the Port of New Orleans and the Plaquemines Parish Port to promote cooperation that has never before existed. Our intent is to make sure that the oil industry does not find smoother sailing in Mississippi and/or Alabama after Katrina's disruptions and problems, but instead finds an alternative in the Port of Plaquemines Parish. We hope that this will bring new life to our region.

### **BAPTISTE COLLETTE DREDGING**

We have received support from seven parishes and the Regional Planning Commission for this vital project. Deepening the path through the Baptiste Collette Bayou from the Gulf of Mexico to the Mississippi River simply makes good sense. Instead of 110 miles, the distance would be just 70 miles from the Gulf to the Mississippi River. The Baptiste Collette is the only channel available to the eastern Gulf for inland barges and offshore crew boat vessels when the Inner Harbor Navigation Channel locks are down. The deepening will help revitalize Venice and potentially the entire parish. Some \$3 million dollars have been promised from the state and with another \$250,000 from the Plaquemines Parish Council, the feasibility study will begin. This project has the potential to save jobs for the whole state. The parishes supporting Plaquemines in this project are: St. Tammany, St. Bernard, Orleans, St. John the Baptist, St. Charles and Jefferson.

### **PETER'S ROAD BRIDGE EXTENSION/BYPASS ROAD**

Due to the anticipated Baptiste Collette deepening, a bypass road is needed in Jefferson Parish to connect Peters Road to Walker Road. Thanks to a state budget surplus and some hard work, Plaquemines was able to obtain first phase funding this year for the bypass project. Engineers are currently working on the design of approach roads- the first step in the process. In order to secure all the funding needed for this project, it was necessary to break it down into segments. Now that the first phase has been funded and work is underway, we are working diligently to obtain phase II funding. Rest assured this vital project is moving forward. And we thank our friends in Jefferson Parish for their great support of this project.

## **HURRICANE PREPARATION**

While Plaquemines Parish remains without significant federal levees and the prospect of levees all the way down to Venice may be years away, Plaquemines is better prepared than ever for any type of future storm event. We did not wait for the Army Corps of Engineers; our own workers repaired many levee breaches to ensure the best protection possible for this storm season. One such effort included the creating of an 8 foot levee from Walker Road to Oakville providing crucial protection for a vulnerable Belle Chasse. Without this quick action this year, a Hurricane coming into the parish at just the right angle could have meant massive flooding in Belle Chasse. In addition, we have stockpiled sand bags, water tubes for containment and even signed historic cooperative agreements to share necessary equipment from neighboring parishes should the need arise. Our goal is to protect *every* home because *every* home is worth it!

## **WHAT IT ONCE WAS**

These projects, the Baptiste Collette deepening, the Peters Road By-pass and the federalization of 34 miles of supplemental levees will allow Venice to become the vital oil industry port it once was in the 1980's. We intend to keep these projects on track, and as long as they come to fruition, there is no doubt the rebirth of Venice will soon follow and there will be greater prosperity and hope for the future of our entire parish.

## **MORE ON THE ROAD AHEAD**

The road ahead looks to be long and arduous. Much work is still to be done to bring Plaquemines Parish back. These are just a few of our priorities on which we will be focusing very hard in the coming months:

- Federalization of levees from Walker Road to West Point ala Hache.
- State-of-the-art buildings that will be elevated to withstand hurricanes with the force of Katrina.
- Clearing debris from all of our marshes to help their ecological growth.
- Restoration and elevation of all of our levees in Plaquemines, including private levees.

## **TOP PRIORITY**

- Using Plaquemines' share of off-shore oil revenues over the next ten years to re-build our barrier islands using excess river sediment. Instead of waiting for

these funds to trickle in each year, we intend to sell bonds and acquire millions of dollars as soon as possible to begin and complete this essential work.

## **LEGACY CAMPAIGN**

In addition, we envision not only a safer Plaquemines Parish, but a better one with more opportunities for our children, our teens and our elderly citizens. To that end, we successfully lobbied the United Way to hire a planner to help us bring back our community centers bigger and better than ever. This led to the 'Legacy Campaign' an effort now joined by the YMCA, Plaquemines Schools, United Way and of course, your Plaquemines Parish Government. We envision several sprawling community centers to serve all of Plaquemines Parish...with buses between centers to link various programs to all parts of the parish. From gyms and ball fields, to recreation centers and meeting places, we intend to build state-of-the-art facilities for young and old alike. This project proposes activities and facilities that have never been offered for the children and residents of Plaquemines Parish. Designing and fund raising are currently underway, and we will keep you informed of our progress.

I ask you to join me in supporting the initiatives I have outlined and those that have been implemented as we work to make our parish stronger than ever before. I thank everyone who has come back to our parish. Your presence makes us stronger and we hope that soon everyone will be back. I assure you that all of us in Plaquemines Parish Government are working hard each day to make that happen and initiate improvements that will mean a brighter future for all of us.

God Bless!

Billy Nungesser  
Plaquemines Parish President