

# FLOOD PROTECTION MEETING

Thursday, July 21, 2011

Hosted by: **Eden Isles Homeowners Association, special projects committee**

This meeting was held at the request of State Representative Nita Hutter who expressed her interest in storm surge protection for the North Shore. Representative Hutter along with Mr. Garret Graves, the Chair of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana (CPRA) and Ms. Sherri LeBas, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Transportation attended the meeting to address storm surge concerns.



The meeting was also attended by local and state representatives including:

Nita Hutter, State Representative, District 104

Greg Cromer, State Representative, District 90

A. G. Crowe, State Senator, District 1

Richard Artigue, St. Tammany Parish Councilman, District 13

Jerry Binder, St. Tammany Parish Councilman, District 12

Ms. LeBas addressed the positive impact the completion of the new Interstate Twin Span will have on our community. Mr. Graves provided a detailed discussion on the objectives of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana (CPRA).

Mr. Graves said that comprehensive studies to assess north shore storm risk factors and cost benefit studies associated with various protection projects are currently underway.



Mr. Graves gave a brief history of the Corps storm surge plans dating back to when the Corps originally proposed building gates at the Rigolets and Chef Pass, but then abandoned those plans in favor of levees along the south shore.

Mr. Graves believes the environmental concerns raised at the time which caused the Corps to abandon the original "Barrier Plan" in favor of levees along the south shore can be adequately addressed with updated control structure designs that are now available.

However, Mr. Graves feels that implementing such plans would take decades to go through the government's bureaucratic process. It was pointed out to Mr. Graves that control structures at the

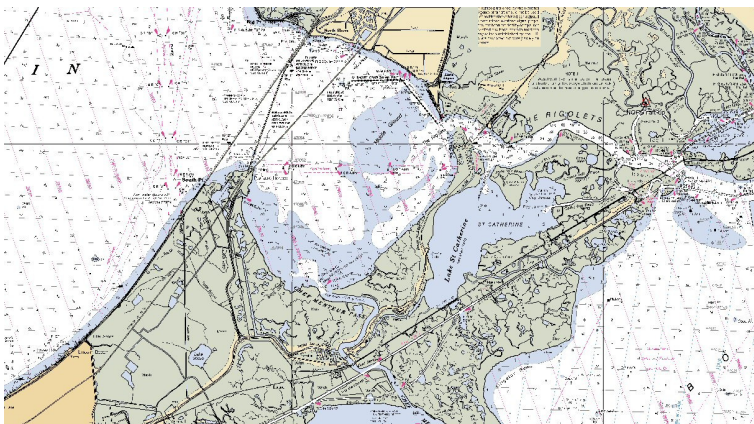
Rigolets and Chef Passes were authorized and funding approved by congress 40 years ago and that authorization had never been formally rescinded.

Mr. Graves stated that another concern associated with control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Passes is what adverse impact it would have on Mississippi. Mr. John Faust addressed that concern by stating that a scientific study by Mississippi State University concluded that control structures designed to be over topped at an elevation of approximately 12 feet would provide protection without adversely impacting Mississippi.

Mr. Graves did not disagree that control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Passes would provide the greatest protection; however, he feels that achieving that objective will take too long and funding the project would be a problem. His position on north shore protection is: the state should concentrate their time, energy and resources on smaller projects like dredging drainage waterways, constructing pumping stations, rebuild costal wetlands and constructing levee systems to protect smaller self contained areas.

Those in attendance feel that the construction of 21' high levees along the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain from Jefferson Parish to the Twin Span (blocking off escape through the Bayou Sauvage marsh) along with blocking the Industrial Cannel escape and the additional drainage pumping into the lake has increased storm surge risk to the north shore.

The major concern expressed by the attendees is the “slosh” effect that accompanies a wind shift.



*Note: As hurricanes approach, the storm surge gradually enters the lake over a period of days and held in place by wind, builds up along the western portion. Upon passage of a storm the winds change direction. The surge created by the change in wind direction rapidly forces the accumulated contents of the lake to rush to the east end of the lake. As a result of hurricane projects along the southern and eastern shorelines of the lake, the only place the water can exit is through the*

*relatively narrow opening under the I-10 Twin Spans followed by the smaller Rigolets and Chef Passes. These passes cannot handle the volume of the surge quick enough. With a large enough storm, as was the case for Katrina, this back-end surge over-flows into populated areas with disastrous consequences. It was this very situation that destroyed the I-10 “twin spans” and the Slidell area during the passage of Hurricane Katrina.*

The consensus of everyone in attendance was the most comprehensive and cost effective solution to storm surge protection for the parishes located around Lake Pontchartrain is to construct control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Pass to keep the surge out of the lake to begin with rather than deal with the surge as it tries to exit the lake. Mr. Longstreet asked Mr. Graves to insure that the comprehensive storm studies now being prepared reflect the position that control structures are the ultimate solution and would benefit all parishes surrounding the lake or about one fourth of the entire population of Louisiana.

Mr. Graves recognizes the frustration in not vigorously pursuing what is believed to be the logical, most cost effective and comprehensive solution to the storm surge problem, but asked that decisions on storm surge protection for the north shore be delayed until studies on the issue are completed.

Mr. Graves was asked if the time and funding concerns associated with control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Passes could be expedited based on the following:

1. Control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Passes was authorized and funding approved by congress 40 years ago and that authorization and approval has never been rescinded.
2. The state has the authority and obligation to file a mitigation lawsuit against the Corps of Engineers showing how their projects have increased the storm surge risk and environmental harm to St. Tammany and other parishes. By using this mitigation process, control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Passes could be “Fast Tracked” - bypassing much of the “Red Tape” similar to what was done to close the MRGO.

Mr. Graves conceded that filing a mitigation lawsuit against the Corps may result in forcing the Corps to redirect their efforts to build control structures at the Rigolets and Chef Passes, but he feels that filing a lawsuit against the Corps is not a direction that the state should pursue at this time.

After the formal meeting was concluded there was some discussion among Representative Hutter, Cromer and Senator Crowe to explore the possibility of initiating a mitigation lawsuit against the Corps of Engineers in order to expedite storm surge protection for the north shore.

7-25-11

- minutes taken by Eden Isles Homeowners Association, special projects committee  
- subject to corrections, additions, clarifications

- [www.eihoa.org/fpc](http://www.eihoa.org/fpc)