

Plaquemines Parish Government

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The Honorable David Vitter
United States Senator
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Vitter:

I appreciate you taking the time to discuss issues with me on 16 July 2009. I have drafted a follow-up letter per our conversation on said date. Plaquemines Parish Government (PPG), along with the State and Corps of Engineers (COE), is working very hard to complete all necessary levees and pump station improvements to meet the 1 June 2011 deadline. PPG understands how enormous this undertaking is and the pressure the COE is operating under.

However, despite these efforts, there is a major gap in the Plaquemines Parish protection under the current COE plans. As we spoke about in our previous meeting the current Greater New Orleans Hurricane Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (GNOHSDRRS), or simply the 100-year protection, currently ends in Plaquemines Parish at the community of Oakville. PPG understands that this was, and is, the existing Federally authorized limits for West Bank and Vicinity Project (WBV). PPG is also aware that during the emergency supplementals granted post Katrina, WBV, and not the remaining New Orleans to Venice (NOV) levees were included in the 100-year protection.

In the process to accelerate to completion of the WBV project (and the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity project) and to expedite the construction of the 100-year protection, the Corps got approval to achieve NEPA compliance through alternative arrangements through the Individual Environmental Reports (IER). IERs allow the COE to do environmental studies in "pieces" or by reaches instead of the holistic approach traditionally required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). IERs are done very quickly and usually result in minimal impact due to the small area they frequently cover.

The entire WBV footprint was granted this waiver and also was elevated to the 100-year risk reduction levels. South of the WBV projects, ending at the Oakville community, begins the NOV project levees. These are currently non-Federal (but authorized to be built to Federal standards and be incorporated into the federal system) and Federal levees which extend south to Venice on the west bank of Plaquemines Parish. NOV was not granted the emergency waivers along with the 100-year risk reduction levels of protection. Within the NOV foot print is the community of Jesuit Bend. This community contains approximately 1,450 homes with an average of 3 residents per home. Jesuit Bend is contained within Reach 1 of the NOV project and is adjacent to the WBV closure at Oakville.

Currently, the COE plans to build a flood gate to enclose the WBV 100-year elevations at Oakville leaving the Jesuit Bend area out of the 100-year protection. PPG proposes to have the NOV Reach 1, Jesuit Bend, included in the 100-year elevations. PPG has looked at different alternatives to accomplish this including providing funds and having COE increase the elevation as a "betterment" to the NOV project and having NOV Reach 1 re-authorized and put into the WBV project with funds re-programmed from the NOV project to the WBV project. The latter will take Congressional language which PPG is seeking through your office.

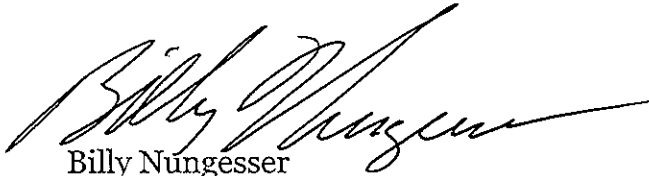
PPG is asking your office to formally request the COE to draft Congressional language stating that the levees / floodwalls from Oakville to LaReussite (COE project name NOV-NF-04 -Jesuit Bend) be incorporated into the GNOHSDRRS via the WBV authorization and that funds in the amount of \$200 million be re-programmed from the existing NOV project to the WBV project and declaring that the funds are solely for the purpose of building the 8-mile Jesuit Bend levee to 100-year risk reduction levels. Also, that all accelerated features contained in the WBV authorization, such as the IER process, be applied to this additional reach. This can be accomplished for no additional cost to the COE or Federal Government through cost-savings and reprogramming from current appropriations.

PPG estimates, using COE figures, the floodgate, and associated tie-in levees, have a construction cost of approximately \$20 million and is required to close the 100-year level of protection at Oakville. If this money is added to the already authorized \$200 million, the levee through Jesuit Bend can be elevated from the current authorized +9 feet to the projected 100-year level elevations of +12 feet. This still leaves the need for a closure to the 100-year level if not constructed at Oakville. PPG has had discussions with Michael Stack, LADOTD, regarding the elevation of Hwy 23. PPG is willing to work with LADOTD to pay the differential in cost to assure Hwy 23 is designed and built to meet the 100-year elevations and meet the new COE requirements for levee design and material. This will assure there are no additional costs to the COE or Federal Government. Special attention will be taken during design to avoid major impacts to the LaReussite siphon. Current PPG plans are to construct the tie-in levee North of the Siphon.

This encloses the entire Belle Chasse community in the north, to the Jesuit Bend community in the south. The residents of Plaquemines Parish are strongly in favor of the idea along with the State of Louisiana and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Authority West.

Again, on behalf of the citizens of Plaquemines Parish, I would like to thank you for your continued support of our Parish and realize that the rebuilding process depends greatly on the protection from these devastating storms.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Billy Nungesser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Billy Nungesser
Parish President