

Group Predicts Gloomy Outlook

By: **Kathrine Schmidt**, *The Courier Staff Writer*



Unemployment will get worse. Businesses could be subject to more taxes. Economic recovery will be slow. That was just part of the grim outlook offered for the state's economy Tuesday by Jim Patterson, vice president of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, one of the state's top lobbying and trade groups. "Real serious things are going to impact us if we don't get moving,"

Patterson told the members of the South Central Industrial Association, a regional business group.

Part of that concern comes from the state's employment situation. The state lost 46,900 jobs in 2009, according to the Louisiana Workforce Commission, 2,220 of which were in the Houma-Thibodaux area.

Fewer Louisianans are out of work than residents of 37 other states in recent months. But people in the state are losing their jobs faster than anywhere else in the nation, at a rate tied with Mississippi, Patterson said, a sign the situation will "become much more severe."

He expects the state to continue to face a weak demand for workers, a reversal from 2008, where LABI mobilized workforce-development efforts and employers couldn't find enough people to hire. Patterson also railed against what he called excess government spending, which he fears may put businesses in the cross hairs of tax increases in the future.


He singled out Louisiana's spending on local governments, particularly when facing crushing budget deficits, created as the recession led to lower tax revenues. That loss of money, which has already hit areas like education and health care with three rounds of steep cuts, could be as large as \$2.5 billion by 2011.

"This state does entirely too much that is done on other states at the local level," he said, such as paying for minor local projects like playgrounds, helping support nonprofit groups and supplementing pay of public safety officials.

"That absolutely must end," he said, referring to money used for such projects as a "slush fund."

As for overall spending at the federal level, he fears broader economic implications, with multi-trillion dollar deficits expected by the Obama administration to limit the country's global power. In addition, businesses will bounce back more slowly from the recession if saddled with new costs of meeting federal requirements, like those for health insurance being debated in Congress. Other proposals under debate, like a budget measure to remove long-standing tax breaks for oil-and-gas companies, would be particularly damaging to Louisiana and the Houma-Thibodaux area, he said.

"The massive amounts of spending leave us with an extremely slow economic recovery," he said. "This economic environment is simply criminal." Local legislators echoed Patterson's call for responsible spending but defended local projects. "I disagree with that," said Rep. Gordon Dove, R-Houma. "A lot of things that can be cut in state governments, but hospitals, education, coastal restoration is not our answer."

But what one person might consider wasteful spending is what someone else considers useful. Rep. Dee Richard, a Thibodaux legislator without a party affiliation, says he received \$250,000 this year from his Ways and Means committee seat that he used to help build a bridge in Thibodaux and pay for generators at a home for the mentally handicapped. "Should I be allowed that? I don't know," Richard said, but said he'd be willing to examine the issue further. 

Mark Your Calendar!
SCIA ICE Committee Presents
MEET YOUR REGULATOR DAY
Wednesday, March 10, 2010
To register, call Kathy at 851-2201

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT...



I hope that everyone had a safe and happy Mardi Gras holiday. Your SCIA staff and committees are very busy planning and coordinating several events coming up in the near future.

- SCIA is at the end of its membership dues renewal period and if you have not yet paid your dues, please send them in.
- The "ICE" Committee will be hosting a "Meet Your Regulator Day" on Wednesday,

March 10, 2010 at the Houma Municipal Auditorium. Registration will be from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and the workshop will run from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with breakfast & lunch being served. Participating Agencies include: USCG, EPA, DEQ, ABS, MMS, DNR, Lafourche, St. Mary & Terrebonne Port Directors, U.S. Customs, LA State Police, Lafourche & Terrebonne Sheriffs. I would to recognize and thank our sponsors: Cintas, El Paso, Safety & Training Consultants, Sam's Audio, Seacor Marine, and Wright & Percy.

- SCIA is coordinating a "Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District Project Workshop for Industry". The levee district will be developing a new project phase by having barges built that will be placed in the Houma Navigation Canal as a source of hurricane protection. SCIA is providing a workshop on the requirements necessary to construct these barges. This is an opportunity for local regional businesses to learn the rules & regulations for doing business with the levee district on current projects. Presentations

will be made by state & local groups, as well as the engineering project managers. The workshop will be held on Friday, March 12, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and lunch will be provided. The program will be held at Weatherford located at 179 Weatherford Drive (Off Hwy 311 near Hwy 90).


- SCIA Scholarship Applications are now available online for member companies to download. The website address is www.sciaonline.net. Applications will also be available in the back of the room at our March 16th GM meeting. Please distribute them to your employees whose children are graduating from high school and plan to attend college. Louisiana community colleges qualify, as well as four year Louisiana universities. Deadline for applications: April 13, 2010

• The SCIA Membership Committee has begun planning the annual crawfish boil. More information will be coming.

- Our Workforce Development Committee is reorganizing since Work It! Louisiana has officially ended. We are expecting great things to come from this committee.


I want to thank all our committee members and the staff for their hard work and dedication to our SCIA. They are the engine that continues to move this organization forward. The next SCIA General Membership Meeting will be held on March 16 and Ralph Mitchell with Terrebonne Parish Government will be our guest speaker. See you at the meeting.

Anthony (Tony) Boudreaux
SCIA PRESIDENT



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SLEC 2009 Year-In-Review

The South Louisiana Economic Council, in cooperation with its regional, state and local partners, capped off a successful year of services to the parishes of Assumption, Lafourche, St. Mary and Terrebonne as reflected in its just released 2009 Year-in-Review. The 28 page report chronicles significant work done in 2009, a period marked by stability and modest growth within the Bayou Region as contrasted against economic slowdowns reported in other parts of the national economy. Key accomplishments found in the report include;

- Wins of three national advertising awards promoting the Bayou Region
- The re-launch of a new buildings and sites online tool to assist in relocation and recruiting of new businesses
- 57 unique sessions of events, training or workshops
- 456 small businesses assisted through the Technical Assistance Network administered by SLEC
- 231 businesses assisted through the Small Business Development Center at SLEC
- 12 businesses assisted through the Small and Emerging Business Development program, a Louisiana Economic Development program administered by SLEC
- Collaboration with Louisiana Economic Development and Entergy Louisiana to pursue leads on companies inquiring on relocation or expansion in the Bayou Region
- Completion of two, 10-week entrepreneur training series

- including new collaboration on microenterprise with the Catholic Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux CENTS program
- Sponsoring of candidates from area chambers and economic development groups for completion of Community Development Institute Training at Conway Arkansas
- Hosting of quarterly economic development collaboration meetings
- Sponsoring of a USDA Rural Economic Development training and business support in St. Mary and Assumption Parishes
- Publishing of the quarterly Bayou Region Business Barometer with key economic indicators for the region
- Sponsoring in cooperation with Coastal Commerce Bank, the Louisiana Economic Outlook with Dr. Loren Scott
- Completion of a 48 page Features Attraction Report

According to SLEC CEO, Vic Lafont, "Our 2009 Annual Report is a reflection of the aggressive activity within our region that has allowed us to remain eco-nomically stable and even achieve growth during challenging economic times. Our top national rankings are a credit to the tenacity of our industries, whose hope, optimism and creativity continue to shine."

The complete report is available online at www.bayouregion.com/SLEC_reports along with reports of SLEC's activities in previous years. 



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T. Baker Smith Partners with LSU to Develop a Storm Surge and Wave Monitoring Network

By: Paula Schouest, TBS

HOUMA, LA — T. Baker Smith (TBS) is a key partner in a research proposal Louisiana State University (LSU) has submitted to the Board of Regents for funding to develop a Mobile Storm Surge and Wave Monitoring Network to improve the prediction of hurricane impacts on coastal Louisiana.

The proposal builds on the extensive coastal modeling and monitoring capabilities at LSU, the experienced professional services offered by TBS, and the capability of measuring hurricane waves in the nearshore at University of Notre Dame (UND), which successfully developed and deployed coastal wave and surge gauges by helicopters in the 2008 hurricane season.

TBS participated in the first field operation of the joint LSU/TBS/ UND team for Tropical Storm Ida in 2009. The field operation involved the deployment and retrieval of five wave and surge gages in Breton Sound. The data is currently being analyzed in depth and will be presented at the State of the Coast meeting in June 2010.


“Basically when everyone else is evacuating for a storm, we will be the only vehicles traveling towards the coastline to drop surge gages in the water for us to analyze and use for modeling after the storm,” said Kenny Smith, President and CEO of T. Baker Smith.

In the past, there has been great success of wave and surge measurements using helicopter deployment seaward of barrier islands, but no measurements were made over the marshes and wetlands and near levees or other infrastructure. Thus, the proposed research is aimed to carry out coordinated field campaigns that include wave and surge measurements in both offshore and onshore areas in order to provide a coherent dataset that will be used to improve computer models for storm surge and hurricane waves. The data can then be merged into computer models for coastal restoration and protection in Louisiana and beyond.

Dr. Q. Jim Chen, LSU Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the Principal Investigator of the LSU proposal said, “The strong partnership between LSU and TBS is essential to the success of this project. There is no doubt that the Louisiana engineering industry and coastal parishes will greatly benefit from the proposed environmental monitoring and modeling technologies for hurricane protection and coastal restoration.”

T. Baker Smith, Inc. will contribute support financially and in kind to this proposed project. The contribution by the firm will supplement the state funds for supporting research personnel and purchasing wave and surge gages. Furthermore, highly trained technicians from TBS will assist the university research team in the deployment and retrieval of the surge and wave gages.

Kenny Smith, President and CEO of T. Baker Smith said, “TBS is committed to this research project. Our families, our firm, and our livelihood are located along the Gulf Coast; therefore, TBS has a vested interest in helping to monitor and model storm surge so we can improve the prediction of hurricane impacts on coastal Louisiana.”

Additionally, TBS Associate, Jason Kennedy is currently enrolled into the newly-approved graduate program in Coastal and Ecological Engineering at LSU. He will be working on this project as his thesis. 




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Port Commission Elects New Officers


By: Leigh Guidry

At the February 10, 2010, Greater Lafourche Port Commission Board Meeting, the Commission elected its executive officers, who will serve in their newly elected positions for three years. The Board elected Larry Griffin as President, Jimmy Lafont as Vice President, Wilbert Collins as Secretary, and Johnny Melancon, Sr. as Treasurer.

Port Commission President Larry Griffin said, "I am grateful that my fellow commissioners have the confidence in me to re-elect me as president for the next three years." Griffin has served as president for the last three years and has been a commissioner for the past seventeen years.

Griffin, Collins, and Melancon retained their offices, and Jimmy Lafont replaces Donald Vizier as vice president for the remaining three years of this board's tenure. Wilbert Collins has served as the commission's secretary for the last three years and has been a commissioner for ten years. Johnny Melancon, Sr. has been a commissioner for fifteen years and has been treasurer for the last six.

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve as Port Commission Vice President and will work hard to serve the port," said Jimmy Lafont, who has served as a commissioner for nine years, including a previous term as vice president of the board.

The Port Commissioners are elected for six-year terms by the citizens of the 10th ward of Lafourche Parish. The executive board's officers are nominated and elected by the board of commissioners every three years. 



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**South Central Industrial Association
presents**

Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District Project Workshop for Industry

**Friday, March 12, 2010
10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

Refreshments and lunch will be served

Hosted by:

**Weatherford, 179 Weatherford Drive,
Schriever, LA (off Hwy 311 near Hwy 90)**



RSVP required to: 985-851-2201 jane@sciaonline.net

The Terrebonne Levee & Conservation District has designed several Flood Control structures, (Swing Gates, Floodwalls and Levees) as a part of the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project.

SCIA is providing a workshop on the design of these structures as well as the bidding requirements necessary to construct these Facilities.

This is an opportunity for local regional businesses to learn the rules & regulations for doing business with the levee district on current projects. Presentations will be made by state and local groups, as well as on the engineering and components of the facilities by the project manager(s).

RSVP REQUIRED

T. Baker Smith Names a New Environmental Vice President

By: Paula Schouest, TBS

HOUMA, LA — Randy Landry has recently been promoted to the position of Vice President of the Environmental Discipline at T. Baker Smith, Inc (TBS).

Landry has worked in the environmental discipline for the past 13 years. He has held the position of General Manager of T. Baker Smith's Baton Rouge office since 2006. As General Manager, Landry was responsible for the overall leadership, management, and operations of the office, as well as, recruiting and business development. Before opening the Baton Rouge office, Landry worked in the TBS corporate office in Houma - starting out as a biologist and working his way up to a Principal in Charge.

As Environmental Vice President, Landry will be responsible for managing the overall activities of the environmental discipline throughout the organization. Landry will lead the group to develop and implement the environmental strategic plan, goals, operations, human resource management, and financial performance at all office locations. He will also assist the President/Chief Executive Officer in the development and execution of the firm's corporate culture and yearly goals.

Landry has a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Louisiana State University, as well as a Master of Science degree in Fisheries Science. He is also enrolled to start his Master of Business Administration degree next month. Landry has completed numerous leadership programs throughout his career including the American Council of Engineering Consultants' Senior Executive Institute program.

"I am excited to have Randy as a part of the senior leadership of our firm. We look forward to his leadership in solidifying our existing integrated environmental services and exploring new opportunities that work with our business model," said Kenny Smith, President of T. Baker Smith.

Randy Landry will be working out of the Thibodaux office and can be reached at (985) 852-4207, or at randy.landry@tbsmith.com.



Meet Your Regulator Day

Meet your Regulators for the latest information!

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South Central Industrial Association
"ICE" Industrial Committee on Education

March 10, 2010

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Workshop: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
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Bayou Clearing Project Begins in Bayou Lafourche

By: **Simone Maloz**, *Restore or Retreat*

Travel up Bayou Lafourche to Donaldsonville and you will see that work has begun to clear trees along the bayou to make way for a much-needed dredging project expected to increase freshwater flow into the bayou.

In the fall of 2009, the Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District, the governing body responsible for providing and maintaining the freshwater supply in Bayou Lafourche, contracted with Integrated Pro Services, LLC, of New Orleans, to clear trees on the bank of a six-mile stretch of Bayou Lafourche in Ascension parish. The clearing work began before the end of the year and is the first phase of a dredging project to be conducted by the district beginning this spring. Dredging the northern reaches of Bayou Lafourche will allow an increase of freshwater pumped into the bayou at the Donaldsonville pump station from a daily average of 150 cubic feet per second to 300 feet per second, according to Hugh Caffery, Chairman of the Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District.

"It is great to finally see this project begin the work of improving our vital water supply," said Caffery. "This is just the start of a larger body of work to protect our bayou region's water supply, and I am proud to be a part of it."


A hundred years ago, Bayou Lafourche was dammed from the Mississippi River, severing this region from a vital freshwater source and leading greater subsidence and saltwater intrusion. The current pump station was installed 50 years ago to restore a small percentage of the river water into the bayou, and over these years the bayou has silted up reducing what can be pumped into it. A present

day consequence is the threat of low water and poor water quality. Anaerobic conditions and lack of freshwater flow became a critical issue after Hurricanes Ike and Gustav, threatening the freshwater drinking supply to 300,000 residents and businesses of Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes.

Since the 2008 hurricanes, the Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District has worked diligently to initiate the project to dredge the first six miles of the bayou beginning in Donaldsonville, with financial, legal, and engineering assistance provided by Louisiana's Office of Coastal Restoration and Protection.

"Bayou Lafourche is an example of the many restoration challenges the State has been facing," said Restore or Retreat Executive Director Simone Maloz. "Clearing these major hurdles and initiating the dredging project on Bayou Lafourche sets a positive tone for future restoration projects."

The Reintroduction of Freshwater into Bayou Lafourche, a major coastal restoration project in the State Master Plan for Coastal Protection and Restoration, is still planned. The \$130 million-plus project includes construction of a new pump station in Donaldsonville to increase freshwater flow to 1,000 cubic-feet per second, as well as additional dredging and removal of the weir in Thibodaux. Initial clearing and dredging work being done now are consistent with this larger project on the horizon, says Maloz.

"Bayou Lafourche has always been a vital lifeline to this area, and the work being done by the freshwater district goes a long way in safeguarding this precious resource," said Maloz. 

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