

Poll Shows That Health-reform Efforts Are Deeply Unpopular

By: Kathrine Schmidt, *The Courier Staff Writer*



Almost two-thirds of Louisianians oppose President Barack Obama's plan for health-care reform, one of the state's top pollsters told a Houma audience Tuesday.

"Sixty percent of people are not buying it," said Bernie Pinsonat, who spoke to the general membership luncheon of the South Central Industrial Association, a regional business group. "How can you pay for that and not increase the size of the deficit?"

Pinsonat, who heads Southern Opinion and Research Associates, presented a recently-conducted poll of likely voters on the nation's contentious health-care debate.

Democrats have been pushing to extend health-insurance to the country's millions of uninsured, curb what they consider abusive practices of insurance providers and have floated the idea of a national health-insurance plan. Republicans have framed attempts at reform as government meddling and have called the estimated price-tag of nearly \$1 trillion unacceptable.

The poll surveyed 600 likely voters and was conducted between Aug. 20 and 23. Its margin of error was plus or minus 4 percent.

Here were some results:

- Of likely voters, 62 percent are against the health-reform proposals, 31 percent are in favor.
- Among black respondents, 79 percent support the proposals and 8.8 percent oppose.
- Among white respondents, only 14 percent were in favor, 81.5 percent oppose.
- Fifty-four percent of those polled said some form of reform was needed; 80 percent said they were "very satisfied" or satisfied with their current health care.
- Among the voices in the health-care reform debate, respondents trusted doctors the most. Then hospital administrators, then insurance companies. Congressional Republicans are more trusted than Democratic members.

"There are a lot more people who trust insurers than trust Barack Obama," Pinsonat said.

The health-care issue also breaks down similarly to the

vote for Obama, said Pinsonat, who described himself as nonpartisan but pro-business.

John McCain won Louisiana by 59 percent; Obama got 40 percent. According to state exit polls available at CNN.com, 94 percent of black voters supported Obama while 85 percent of whites voted for McCain.

Pinsonat questioned whether new requirements for insurance companies could mean that existing private policies would continue unchanged.


"It's all about more people being thrown onto the wagon," he said. "Us, we'll have to pay more."

Obama's influence is also likely to figure prominently in next year's Louisiana's Senate race, in which Rep. Charlie Melancon, D-Napoleonville, will challenge Republican incumbent David Vitter.

Pinsonat, echoing other state analysts, said Obama's unpopularity would weigh heavily on the Democratic contender and distract voters from Vitter's admitted "serious sin" with a prostitute.

"What a lucky break for David Vitter to get Barack Obama in his sights," he said.

Vitter could be vulnerable if new questions or developments emerge around the supposed affair, Pinsonat said. Otherwise, the "baggage" that Melancon carries because of his alignment with Obama seems to be playing more heavily in the minds of voters, he said.

He brushed aside criticisms that women voters were a weak point for Vitter. The senator polled 8 points better among women than men, he said. 



Lafourche and Terrebonne teachers honored

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT...



I would like to start off by thanking our membership and all our sponsors for their incredible support of the 2009 SCIA Golf Tournament. I want to thank the SCIA Golf Committee and staff for all their hard work this year. The Golf committee did another outstanding job planning and coordinating this event. I would also like to thank all our food and beverage sponsors and tournament day volunteers. Unfortunately, the one variable that we could not control was the weather and in the end Mother Nature had the last word.

Your SCIA staff, committees and board of directors continue to be very busy meeting on and monitoring issues important to industry and our region. Just recently, members of the SCIA board met with administrators from Nicholls State University and Fletcher Community College in an attempt to work out a solution to retain a Manufacturing Technology program in

our region. A very positive discussion was held with several possible solutions discussed. We will continue to work on this issue and keep our membership informed as progress is made. Also, the Infrastructure and Governmental Affairs committee continues to monitor the many road and bridge projects impacting our area and facilitated two recent meeting regarding the HNC lock system. It is never too late to get involved with one of our committees, for more information call the SCIA office.

The next General Membership Meeting will be held on October 20, 2009 at the Quality Hotel and our scheduled guest speaker is Windell Curole. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting. Don't forget to visit our website at www.sciaonline.net for information and updates.

Sincerely,

Anthony (Tony) Boudreaux
SCIA PRESIDENT

SCIA Golf Tournament photos available
online at www.sciaonline.net

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Prepare Yourself! Prospect Street Bridge is Finally Under Construction

By: Naomi King with excerpts from Jane Arnette, *The Courier Staff Writer*

It is finally happening! Prospect Street Bridge will soon be under construction. For many years, this has been an SCIA priority project because of the huge effects it will have on the industrial community on the eastside of Houma. The huge transportation trucks, employees who commute and business associates will have to find alternate routes to reach their destinations.

You think traffic is bad now in Houma? Just wait until the work begins on the Prospect Street Bridge!!!!

In a little over three months, the two-lane Prospect Street Bridge is scheduled to close for good. It will be replaced with a \$26.7 million six-lane span that aims to eliminate the bottleneck that results in long waits for motorists trying to cross Bayou Terrebonne. It will take about two years to complete.

James Construction Group of Baton Rouge will build the lift bridge over two years, said Dustin Annison, state Transportation Department spokesman.

The resulting detours, business and airport officials say, will be a major inconvenience for their clients and employees.

"There will probably be traffic backups in the beginning until people figure out the best way to get around town," Annison said. "We'll have signage in place to detour people around the construction."

Drivers have two logical alternatives: the Howard Avenue Bridge and the Daigleville Bridge, where Grand Caillou Road meets East Main Street.

Those two spans were built to ease traffic on Prospect, transportation officials said.

The Howard Avenue Bridge took four years and \$1 million to build. It was completed in 1999.

The Daigleville Bridge also took four years to build. It was finished in April 2004 and cost \$5.49 million.

Parish President Michel Claudet is seeking ideas on ways to alleviate traffic congestion. One suggestion is that a second turn lane be added at the Daigleville Bridge for motorists turning from Grand Caillou Road onto East Park Avenue.

Construction of the Prospect Street Bridge is scheduled

to last 650 days, or a little less than two years, and the construction company will be fined \$5,000 for each day past that deadline, Annison said. Original estimates were that the project would take four years, but James Construction committed to the shorter time line, Annison said.




Crews will work five days a week, he said. In addition to removing the old span and building the new one, traffic signals must be upgraded to account for new lanes that will be added to Main and Prospect streets and Park Avenue.

The existing span, one of Terrebonne's worst bottlenecks, was built in 1965 and has failed to keep pace with the expanding population and changing driving patterns. The span is only 26 feet wide but is used by more than 17,000 motorists each day.

The nearby Houma-Terrebonne Airport and industrial park will be among areas affected by the construction and its resulting traffic, said Earl Hicks, airport director. Workers on Grand Caillou Road and in the Thompson Road industrial area also drive through the airport when traveling to and from their homes in Coteau, Bayou Blue, southeast Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish.

"It's going to be a terrible inconvenience for people for two years," Hicks said.

Airport officials had informal discussions about building a temporary bridge over Bayou Terrebonne near Aviation Road, Hicks said, but those plans were derailed by concerns that drivers' headlights would interfere with the airport's landing lights.

The Prospect Street Bridge was initially expected to cost \$13.6 million, and construction was to have started in fall 2007. But post-Katrina construction pushed the costs significantly higher, delaying the project. 



Scott Presents Economic Forecast for SLEC

As Reported from the Associated Press

Economist Loren Scott who a couple of months ago presented an enlightening program to SCIA, rolled out his economist forecast at the annual SLEC luncheon sponsored by Coastal Commerce Bank.

After years of a moribund economy, Monroe will add jobs at the fastest pace in Louisiana in 2010 and 2011, while New Orleans will stagger through its post-Hurricane Katrina recovery with the slowest employment growth.

That's the analysis of university economists who issued a two-year jobs forecast Wednesday. Louisiana will add 17,800 non-farm jobs in 2010, a growth rate of 0.9 percent, followed by the addition of 18,000 in 2011, another 0.9 percent growth rate, according to the Louisiana Economic Forecast. The forecast said Lafayette will add mostly construction jobs.

But Lafayette along with New Orleans, Houma-Thibodaux and Alexandria will experience something of a drag in 2010-2011, said Loren Scott, professor emeritus of economics at Louisiana State University and an author of the study.

Among metro areas, Monroe will grow fastest on a percentage basis, while Baton Rouge will add the largest number of jobs. New Orleans won't add enough jobs to reach its 1980 employment levels, the forecast said. The study suggested the New Orleans area is being shunned by major new business investment because of concerns about levee safety, the large amount of housing out of service since Katrina struck in August 2005 and crime. For now, the local economy is being propped up by \$9.3 billion in rebuilding projects.

City officials, meanwhile, are grappling with a projected 2010 budget shortfall of more than \$60 million. "It's going to be real worrisome after 2011 when those levee projects and those bridge projects start being finished," said Scott.

Statewide, there are two major wild cards: a proposed federal tax on petroleum production and carbon legislation that could have huge impact on petrochemical manufacturing. If neither passes, Louisiana job growth could be higher than forecast, the report said.

The threat of the petroleum tax, which has yet to be considered by Congress, is already chilling Lafayette and Houma-Thibodaux, the report said. A cap-and-trade proposal for carbon emissions, which faces an uncertain future after passing the House, is of concern for Baton Rouge and Lake Charles, both heavily dependent on chemical manufacturing and refining.

- After losing jobs for seven years, Monroe will lead in percentage of new jobs: 1,900, or 2.5 percent, and 1,500, or 1.9 percent, in 2011. The outlook assumes fruition of the V-Vehicle Co. assembly plant with 1,400 employees, hiring at the Foster Farms chicken plant in Farmerville and a Congra sweet potato plant. The area is still recovering from the closure of a State Farm Insurance operations center (900 jobs lost) and the Guide Corp. auto headlight plant (800 jobs).


- New Orleans will add 3,000 jobs in 2010 and another 2,500 in 2011, a relatively weak figure bolstered by rebuilding. A sagging tourism-convention sector and probable job losses at the Michoud Assembly Facility as the space shuttle program ends will result in the slowest job growth rate over


the next two years. Lingering impacts from Katrina are not the city's only woes. Laura Calcagno, a New Orleans-area insurance account manager, blamed a poor education system, the predominance of an unskilled workforce and crime as additional forces keeping companies from locating in New Orleans and pushing some to move out. "It's like New Orleans is not going to be rebuilt," she said. In a separate report Tuesday, Scott predicted New Orleans would have the slowest growth along the Louisiana-Mississippi-Alabama Gulf Coast over the next two years.

- Baton Rouge will add 4,000 jobs in 2010 and 5,500 in 2011. The region will benefit from \$5.1 billion in construction projects and industrial expansion, including a new chemical plant in Plaquemine and a reopened paper mill in St. Francisville. However, the area could face state government layoffs as Gov. Bobby Jindal fights budget problems.

- Houma will add 900 jobs in 2010 and 800 in 2011. Shipyards and offshore fabrication companies will provide the bulk of the new jobs. A factor to watch is the proposed petroleum tax.

- Lafayette will add 700 jobs in 2010 and 1,000 jobs in 2011, mostly because of \$30 million in construction projects.

- Alexandria will add 600 jobs in 2010 and 600 in 2011. Employment is expected to rebound at the Union Tank Car Co. plant, which cut its payroll during the recession. 



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New Owner of Marine Electric

Marine Electric of Houma, Louisiana recently announced that Clay Naquin is the new Owner and president. Naquin has been working with Marine Electric for the past three years. He is retired from the Houma Police Department with more than 20 years of experience. Following his retirement, he joined the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government's Risk Management Department before joining Marine Electric. The company caters to the marine business in electrical services including refrigeration and air conditioning. 



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Fletcher Offering Free Machine Tool Class

By: Elmy Savoie

Fletcher Technical Community College is offering a FREE six week, machine tool technology class. Classes start on: October 6th, January 19th and March 9th. The fast start non-credit course is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm for six weeks. The course includes basic safety, precision tools and measurements, blueprint reading, basic machine shop skills, applied math, and operation of CNC machining and turning centers. Space is limited and registration is required. To register for the class or for more information, please contact Fletcher's Machine Tool Technology Instructor, Mr. Chris Aysen at 985-858-5727.



The Free Class is made possible through a Board of Regents Enhancement Grant for 2-Year Institutions. The grant, "Machining: Shaping the Future of the Louisiana Bayou Region", incorporates an industry-designed training course for Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) machining. The machine tool technology grant is one of the three enhancement grants Fletcher received from the Board of Regents totaling \$196,484.00.

Fletcher Reaches Record Fall 2009 Enrollment

By: Elmy Savoie

Fletcher Technical Community College achieved a record enrollment of 1,823 students for fall 2009. The enrollment reported to the Board of Regents earlier this week represents a 19.5% increase from the 1,525 census enrollment in fall 2008 and a 183% increase in enrollment since its designation as a technical community college in 2003.

"The visionary leadership of the community that supported a technical community college in this region could not have foreseen the exponential enrollment," stated Chancellor Travis Lavigne. "This growth illustrates a more imminent need to expand services with the development of a new campus to assure Fletcher's ability to provide post secondary education opportunities for our students and our community."

William Tulak, Vice Chancellor of Instruction added, "Several factors can be attributed to Fletcher's recent enrollment increase including a greater awareness of the college's programs, transferability of courses to other colleges and universities, smaller class sizes and affordable tuition."

FALL ENROLLMENT BY PROGRAM:

- Non Declared* & General Studies 37%
- Allied Health & Nursing 31%
- Technical Programs 14%
- Accounting & Office Systems 13%
- Marine 5%

**Students who are intent on transferring to other colleges or universities.*

Fletcher Technical Community College is an open-admission, two-year public institution of higher education dedicated to offering quality technical and academic programs to the citizens of South Louisiana for the purpose of preparing individuals for employment, career advancement, and lifelong learning. Fletcher is accredited by both the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Accrediting Commission of the Council on Occupational Education.

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Manson Gulf Builds New Barge

HOUMA, LA — Tucked amid sugar-cane fields along the Houma Navigation Canal, the Manson Gulf construction company doesn't call attention to itself.

But its newest 380-foot barge, the \$80 million E.P. Paup, is anything but low-profile.

The derrick barge, which will be used to install or dismantle offshore oil-and-gas platforms, boasts a 265-foot-tall crane that can lift up to 1,000 tons in water 1,000 feet deep. It's longer than a football field and 26 stories tall.

"This really does boost the economy," said company Vice President Vincent Dinkler, who helped christen the vessel in an Aug. 29 ceremony.

Dinkler, said he's proud Louisiana labor built the barge; the project kept about 90 people busy at the company's shipyard at 392 Old Bayou Dularge Road.

Manson Gulf, a wholly owned subsidiary of Manson Construction of Seattle, Wash., has operated in Houma since 1997. Aside from oilfield and marine fabrication, it has contracts for dredging and levee building, work Manson has done in both Lafourche Parish and the New Orleans area.

The new model is bigger than the existing derrick barge, which can lift 500 tons and has a crew capacity of 90. The E.P. Paup will be U.S.-flagged and hold 156 crew members with double the lift capacity.

It's the first such vessel built for the Gulf of Mexico in 40 years, Dinkler says.

Work started nearly two years ago. The barge's base was built in Portland, Ore., the cabin quarters were put together in Abbeville, with part of the crane made at APA Fabrication in Houma. The crane's 265-foot boom, as well as the final assembly of the barge, took place at Manson's Houma yard.

Workers are adding the finishing touches, with work expected to be completed by Oct. 31.

Since the crew will work 28 days on and 14 off, the barge is outfitted with sparkling crew quarters, a cafeteria, flat-screen televisions and laundry facilities, as well as conference rooms, offices and a control room. Atop the quarters sits a helicopter landing pad. On the flat deck will sit a smaller crane and whatever construction equipment is needed for jobs offshore.

Across the deck sits the machinery to move and lift the massive crane, whose operators require years of experience.

The barge's crew requires the addition of at least 50 new jobs, not counting vendors who supply services such as towing and catering.

Bucky Monteiro, of Caillou Island Towing, which does work for the company, is impressed with the new barge. 



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SCIA IGA Mini-Committee met at Gulf Island with parish officials and levee district to discuss The Houma Navigation Canal lock system. Chairman Simone Maloz and Sub-chair Roy Francis led the meeting.



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The golf tournament is an SCIA fund-raiser. Funds obtained help to support programs such as: Restore or Retreat, LA 1, two education foundations, workforce development, three scholarships for graduating seniors, three Region 3 Technical College Scholarships, FTCC SCIA Memorial Professorship, economic development, and levee protection. We concentrate on programs that can have an impact on the region that we serve – Lafourche, Assumption, St. Mary & Terrebonne Parishes. 

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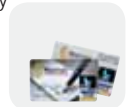
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Submar Holds Open House

By Monique Roberts, *Submar Marketing*

Submar held an open house on October 5, 2009 for media, friends, neighbors, parish representatives and officials etc. to celebrate the completion of its year-long beautification project. This beautification project is a reflection of our company being an environmentally conscious organization while increasing the quality of life in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, it was on the same as the SCIA golf tournament and many of us were unable to attend.


Over the past several months Submar has been working diligently on a three phase project to modernize and beautify its local manufacturing facility. The first phase consisted of installing new equipment to produce concrete. Some direct results of the new equipment are: less dust, waste, noise and approximately 600 less trucks annually in the neighborhood, along with a significantly improved quality product for Submar's customers. The second phase of the project included the addition of a building to close the gap facing Dunn Street. Submar has recently completed the third phase of the project which includes the beautification of the property (painting of the building, decorative concrete block parking, landscaping and fencing around the property).

Submar, Inc. is a privately owned corporation with headquarters in Houma, Louisiana, which manufactures articulating concrete mats. The company was formed in 1980 and presently has over 40 manufacturing facilities internationally serving the United States, Mexico and Nigeria. Submar's corporate office and manufacturing in Houma has remained constant over the years supplying our first market, the Oil & Gas Pipeline Industry in the Gulf of Mexico.

Submar was recruited to 805 Dunn Street, Houma, LA in 1993 by Terrebonne Parish and has since flourished as a permanent resident. Articulated concrete mat crossings are accepted as the new standard by DOT, MMS, Contractors and pipeline operators. The concrete mat is superior in quality of construction, costs savings, and worker safety.

Submar entered into the onshore erosion control business in 1997 and has since completed projects in almost all 50 states. Submar's engineered systems are a dynamic state combining time-tested articulated concrete mat technology and "green" design applications offering our customers a wide variety of value-added solutions while protecting nature. Submar performs turnkey installation for clients on every type of inland waterway. There are very few design professionals and even fewer design and construction professionals in the United States that perform these river restoration services for pipelines. Submar works closely with many municipalities such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in planning and designing river training structures in major waterways. Submar has donated materials, equipment and expertise for the Falgout Canal Project and the Bayou Black Recreation Center. Locally Submar has completed projects for the Terrebonne General Medical Center and the South Lafourche Airport.

In 2005, Submar began offering site specific solutions for coastal restoration and other inland erosion applications

related to levees, dams, spillways, channel linings, bridge abutments, boat ramps, retention basins, retaining walls, and outfall protection. Submar has completed projects for Chicago O'Hare International Airport, US/Mexico Border Fence for Homeland Security, among many others including DOT, NRS and ASDSO. 

Chet Morrison Contractors Launches Floating Dry Dock in Mexico


HOUMA, LA — (BUSINESS WIRE) — Chet Morrison Contractors, S. de R.L. de C.V. has successfully launched a new floating dry dock at its shipyard facility located in Alvarado, Veracruz, Mexico. The completion of the floating dry dock expands the company's ability to provide barge and boat repair, conversions, upgrades, maintenance, and labor services to oil and maritime companies both regionally and internationally.

The dry dock has a 7,700 long ton lifting capacity, measures 270' long, has a 130'6" beam, 112'6" width between wing walls and meets the ABS Floating Dry Dock rules and regulations.

The construction of the dry dock, designed and built by CMC-Mexico's locally skilled workforce, highlights the company's ability to develop large-scale projects from conception to completion. As the largest floating dry dock to be built by a workforce in Mexico, it marks an historical milestone for Mexico's maritime industry.

"This project was very exciting for us on many levels. The construction of the dry dock helped to generate numerous jobs directly and indirectly for the people in Alvarado, and we plan to continue to develop this shipyard facility to become a hub for energy related services," stated Jeffrey Lee, Chief Operations Officer of Chet Morrison Contractors.

Chet Morrison Contractors' workflow efficient facility in Alvarado, Mexico is located on a 40-acre yard site with convenient access to the Gulf of Mexico. The yard boasts 1,200 feet of bulkheaded waterfront property and offers 24-hour scheduling capability. CMC-Mexico provides fabrication, sandblasting, painting, welding services, and now offers ship repair services.

Chet Morrison Contractors, a subsidiary of Morrison Energy Group, is a leader in providing construction services, including pipeline, diving, well services, ship repair, fabrication, and construction both inland and offshore. CMC operates platform fabrication yards in Houma and New Orleans, Louisiana with international facilities in Mexico and Trinidad. The Company's vision in conducting integrated solutions with its performance-driven team of experts has brought it to the forefront as a principal participant in the oil and gas arena. 

News from LA Oil & Gas Association (LOGA)

By: Jen DeGregorio

The wetlands of south Louisiana have some of the oldest oilfields in the country, a combed-over landscape that has led some in the energy industry to pull out and head for more prosperous shores.

Many have ventured into the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, while others have been mining natural gas from rock deposits in northwest Louisiana and Texas. But as technology has improved in recent years to allow prospectors to tap ever-deeper stores of fuel, some energy firms say coastal Louisiana may soon see a resurgence of exploration and production activity.

"It's not tapped out at all," said Bruce Vincent, president and director of Swift Energy Co. of Texas, the second-largest producer of oil in Louisiana. "South Louisiana is one of the great hydrocarbon-producing areas in the country."

Swift controls thousands of acres from Cameron to Plaquemines parishes, with its top producing field in the Lake Washington area of Plaquemines. The region had been in production since the 1940s, at one time controlled by ExxonMobil, Vincent said. When Swift acquired the property in 2001, the lake was producing about 700 barrels of oil equivalent a day. Now the area is yielding closer to 12,000 barrels a day, and seismic testing has revealed that much more fuel can be found beneath the tricky sands and fault lines that have made fuel production in the Mississippi River delta challenging. Just several weeks ago, Swift installed a new drilling rig in the area.

"We see a lot of opportunity here," said Vincent, who was in New Orleans on Wednesday for the Johnson Rice Energy Conference in the city's Ritz-Carlton hotel.


The prospect of a new oil boom in Louisiana's wetlands — which faces a life-threatening erosion problem, exacerbated by nearly 10,000 miles of old oil access canals — has worried environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and the Gulf Restoration Network. Economic development groups — such as Greater New Orleans Inc. — have meanwhile been lobbying for business from companies that can make use of Louisiana's historic oil patch.

One target has been Denbury Resources Inc., which is just getting started in Louisiana. The company's specialty is replumbing old oilfields to produce "stranded" fuel, pumping carbon dioxide into old wells to loosen trapped


reserves. Denbury has done much of its work in Texas and Mississippi, but the firm recently staked a claim in some south Louisiana territories, CEO Phil Rykhoek explained during a presentation at Wednesday's conference.

Rykhoek pointed to a map of south Louisiana dotted with green, indicating hot spots Denbury has earmarked for potential investments. The company is already in the midst of building a CO2 pipeline from Donaldsonville to fields the company controls in Texas. "We're working hard on expanding our CO2 reserves," Rykhoek said, explaining projections for new business in Louisiana and across the Gulf.

Eric Fox, a portfolio manager with Brittain Capital Management LLC of Alabama, did not expect to hear so much about south Louisiana on Wednesday. The coastal parishes have become old hat as fossil-fuel producers focus on emerging technologies to unleash fuel from once-impossible sources, such as shale. Companies have descended on northwest Louisiana and eastern Texas, for example, to get a piece of the Haynesville Shale, one of the biggest natural gas discoveries in the country.

"The shale plays are what everyone's been talking about," Fox said. Denbury's proposal intrigued Fox, who said the firm "stands out" from most other companies looking to tap new fields. "It's not a high growth area," Fox said of south Louisiana. "But it will produce probably past our lifetimes." 

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Davis Pond Diversion Should Get More Use, Officials Say, Despite Threat to Oyster Beds

By: **Matt Scallan**, *The Times-Picayune*

A crowd of state and local officials lined up Tuesday to demand that the Davis Pond Diversion structure in Luling be opened wide to pump more fresh water into the Barataria Basin.

The structure, which opened in 2002, pumps an average of 5,000 cubic feet of water per second from the Mississippi River into the basin, has the capacity to divert 10,650 cfs. The Army Corps of Engineers is considering ways to improve the operation.

'This is a battle that we cannot afford to lose,' said R. King Milling. The meeting is was designed to get public input, on the project that could build more freshwater marsh in the basin, but could also hurt current oyster beds that depend on the right mix of salt and fresh water.

"This is a battle that we cannot afford to lose, " said R. King Milling, who added that encroaching salt water and the erosion that accompanies it endangers every community in South Louisiana.

Milling's sentiments echoed those of the majority in the audience. "Without fresh water, we're not going to have a way of life down here, " said Lafourche Parish resident Hugh Caffrey.

But Wilbert Collins, an oyster harvester from Golden Meadow, said more fresh water would kill his beds. "If there's no oysters, I can't feed my family, " he said. "If you open the diversion, I'm out of business." The hearing was designed to get information from people who familiar with the health of the basin around lakes Catouache and Salvador.

Tomma Barnes, the corps' project manager for the Louisiana Coastal Area study, which includes the diversion project, said public input is essential to the decision-making process.

"The people who are out there all the time know where the marsh is healthy and where it isn't, " she said.

Project managers need more information to determine whether opening the diversion to its full capacity would improve the health of the basin or whether additional channels are needed to route the water to areas that need help, Barnes said.

The \$120 million diversion project has had a number of problems. Its design held water back from the basin. A \$2 million contract to make cuts in an existing rock wall on the south side of the holding pond and the Cypress Lumber Canal levee are designed to improve the water flow.

"We need to find out if there's a better way to operate it, so we can get better distribution of the water, " Barnes said.


That could include pumping the maximum amount of water through the diversion, or finding better ways to direct it where it needs to go.

Barnes said the amount of sediment that is pumped into the basin isn't known because the project's primary purpose was to pump fresh water into the basin to reduce the salinity

of the water. Too much salinity can kill marsh grass, leading to erosion.

"I was out in the canal today and the water was very clear, " she said. "During the times that the river is high, you would certainly see more sediment."


The Louisiana Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection, Restoration and Conservation on Tuesday urged the corps to crank up to the diversion's full throttle.

"The focus for the Corps has been the ponding area that holds the water when it first comes out the diversion or on the salinity levels instead of worrying about the marshes in the Barataria Basin that the project could be benefiting, " said Ted Falgout, executive director of the Lafourche Parish Port Commission, who is chairman of a subcommittee on freshwater diversions. "This is a crisis situation and we have lost too much land in this area in the last four years not to be taking full advantage of the resources available if we operate the diversion at capacity." 

Fletcher Receives Funding to Complete Land Acquisition for Development of a New Campus

HOUMA, LA — Fletcher Technical Community College is pleased to announce that the state is committing \$2.7 million in Community and Development Block Grants to allow the college to purchase the entire 74.2 acre site for the development of a new campus. Earlier this month, Louisiana Community and Technical College officially closed the first phase of bond projects, which provided the college \$4 million to purchase 32.2 acres of the property needed for the new campus development and to begin the planning and environmental studies.

Governor Bobby Jindal made the announcement to Fletcher Technical Community College today at a press conference at their Allied Health Facility. The new campus will be located near the intersection of Highway 311 and Highway 90. The remaining financing of the \$21.3 million for the construction and development of the new campus is proposed for fall of 2010.

Chancellor Travis Lavigne stated "We are so grateful for the support of Governor Jindal and our local legislative delegation. The additional funding will allow the college to begin the planning of the new campus development to further serve our students and the workforce needs of our community." 

Entergy's Louisiana Companies Recognized for Safety Milestones

LOCKPORT, LA – With up to 34,500 volts of electricity moving across a typical power line, line workers at electrical utilities face one of the most challenging work environments in the world.

However, Entergy Louisiana, LLC and Entergy Gulf States Louisiana, L.L.C. fight those challenges by focusing on safety and several work groups in Louisiana have amassed remarkable safety records that were recently recognized by the Southwest Electric Safety Exchange.

In Southeast Louisiana, employees in the Lockport Network received recognition for working 25 years without a lost-time accident. The Southern Distribution Operations Center was honored for working 15 years without a lost-time accident.

Keith Ruddell, safety specialist for Entergy Louisiana, accepted the awards on behalf of the company at the recent SWESE semi-annual conference. Dennis Dawsey, vice president of Louisiana distribution operations, presented the awards to the respective managers around the state to share with their employees.

Louisiana distribution operations received an award for working from July 20, 2005 through March 18, 2009 without a lost-time accident – a span of 8.7 million man-hours. The time frame includes restoration work following the back-to-back strikes of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and Gustav and Ike last year.

The South Field Metering group was recognized for working 60 years without a lost-time accident. The Jonesboro work group has put together 30 years of safety while the Zachary work group has reached 15 years without a lost-time accident. The West Monroe work group and the West Construction work group were also recognized for 10 years of safe work.


Dawsey said these are phenomenal achievements for which employees deserve to be recognized. He emphasized that these milestones are a direct result of each individual putting safety at the forefront of every decision.

“Safety is about putting people first,” Dawsey said. “These

safety records are impressive and should be celebrated, but what they really mean is that these workgroups looked out for each other and themselves, and everyone went home safely.

“Not only should we work safely for the benefit of our customers,” he added, “but family, friends and loved ones are counting on us to come home each day. Let’s remember those reasons before we begin working so we will be sure to stay accident free.”


Founded in 1950, the Exchange began to reduce the accident rate among electric utility workers. The initial meeting included a group of dedicated utility safety representatives from southwestern Louisiana and southeastern Texas. Today, the Exchange represents 15 utility companies in seven states.

Entergy’s Louisiana utility companies serve more than one million customers through the operating companies Entergy Louisiana, LLC and Entergy Gulf States Louisiana, L.L.C. With operations in southern, central and northeastern Louisiana, the companies are part of Entergy Corporation’s electric system serving 2.7 million customers in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas. 

USI Agent to Serve with State Group

Referred by The Courier

Cindy Lirette of Houma has been named the first-ever women president of the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of Louisiana.

She will hold the position for a year. The state professional trade group represents almost 400 member agencies and about 3,5000 staffers. Lirette, a 35-year veteran of the industry, is a senior vice president of marketing for the state with USI Insurance Services. Its officers are at 304 Corporate Drive, Suite E. 



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