

# Port Fourchon

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## Did You Know?

The Greater Lafourche Port Commission possesses a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn page. The GLPC's Facebook page, which focuses on Port Fourchon, ranks No. 1 in the entire Gulf South in followers among ports with more than 11K people regularly checking in to see what's going on in Fourchon.



# STATE OF THE PORT

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60  
YEARS

Ask anyone on the bayou if they know about **Port Fourchon**, and you'll no doubt get a yes. That's where my daddy works. That's where we launch our boat. That's where oil comes from. But, when you ask the average person how Port Fourchon works or what the Port Commission does, the answer is not so clear. Most people don't know what a great gem we have here in our community, so here is a brief rundown of the basics - who we are, what we do, how we've worked our way into being one of the nation's most important economic engines, and why it is vital to keep that engine running.

The **Greater Lafourche Port Commission (GLPC)**, which is celebrating its **60th anniversary** this year, is a political subdivision of the state of Louisiana, formed in **1960** and governed by a nine-member board, the only elected port commission in the state of Louisiana. They represent a constituency that is comprised of the 10th ward of Lafourche Parish, which is essentially from the Intracoastal Waterway in Larose, south to the **Gulf of Mexico**.

The GLPC has 43 employees that do an outstanding job of handling the day-to-day operations, maintenance, and administration of Port Fourchon and the **South Lafourche Leonard Miller, Jr. Airport (SLA)**. The GLPC operates predominantly as a "landlord," providing basic infrastructure to its tenants. We construct roads and waterlines, dredge channels, construct bulkheads, and provide basic land at Port Fourchon. At the SLA, we provide basic airport infrastructure like a runway, parallel taxiway, road access, waterlines, etc. Once the basic infrastructure is in place, the GLPC leases the property to businesses looking to serve the needs of industry. At both the port and the airport, GLPC operates with its mission statement in mind: to facilitate the economic growth of the communities in which it operates by maximizing the flow of trade and commerce. We do this to grow our economy and preserve our environment and heritage.

Port Fourchon sits at the mouth of **Bayou Lafourche**, where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico and is easily accessible from any area in the Gulf. Located near the end of **Highway 1** in Louisiana, Port Fourchon is in the center of one of the richest and most progressive industrial areas in the Gulf region. We are constantly expanding to meet the needs of business and industry. Under the direction of the GLPC, the port is fortunate to have the knowledgeable leadership, available land, and irrefutable logistical advantage that enable it to be the nation's premier port for the continued support of oil and gas activity in the Gulf of Mexico. Port Fourchon has grown from humble beginnings in 1960 into thousands of acres in the most efficient location to service the needs of the oil and gas industry, with



**Chett Chiasson**

Executive Director

state-of-the-art facilities that exist nowhere else in the world. **The tenants and users of Port Fourchon provide services to nearly 100% of all deepwater offshore energy exploration and production in the Gulf.** This activity, coupled with Port Fourchon being the service base for **LOOP**, means that Port Fourchon plays a strategic role in furnishing this country with about **18% of its entire oil supply**.

The South Lafourche Leonard Miller, Jr. Airport in Galliano has proven to be a valuable element of the transportation system of Lafourche Parish and the State of Louisiana. Recognizing the potential major importance of the SLA in providing air

transportation services to support the continued development of Port Fourchon and offshore mineral exploration and production, the Port Commission acquired the SLA in **2001**. The GLPC also acquired the nearly **1200 acres** surrounding the airport, which is open for industrial development and industrial housing. The airport has rapidly increased aircraft traffic since completion of its 6500 ft runway with 75,000 lb wheel load capacity, resulting in a 300% increase in jet traffic.

We continue to expand the airport and have completed work to add new navigational aids, hangars, and a taxiway.

As you recall, in January of 2010, after working for the GLPC since September 2005, I was afforded the opportunity to become the Executive Director, only the second person to do so since the Port's inception. I knew it would be a challenge

with the tough economic times the country had been in, all of the construction projects we were involved in at the port and airport, and the planning of the port's 50th Anniversary celebration, but never did I imagine what would be coming. Obviously, I am talking about the terrible tragedy of April 20, 2010, when the Deepwater Horizon exploded, killing 11 men and causing the worst oil spill in our nation's history.

From the get go, Port Fourchon was at the epicenter of the response, recovery, and subsequent clean-up effort for this disaster. With facilities in Port Fourchon being the service base for the Deepwater Horizon, the evacuated rig workers were brought to Port Fourchon en route to getting back to their families. With that began the influx of media and all that entails. Once it was realized that there was a major problem with the well and the oil was being emitted uncontrolled, we were tasked with preparation. We began working with **former Lafourche Parish President Charlotte Randolph** and her emergency preparedness staff to formulate a plan of action for protecting the parish's coastline and keeping the vital economic activity at

## FEATURED STORY

# GLPC Makes Substantial Financial Contribution to the \$135 Million Grant Award to Finish Elevating LA 1

What long felt like a dream finally came true with the announcement that the **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)** had awarded a **\$135 million federal INFRA grant** to the **LA 1 Improvement Project**.

The project's approval, which was made official on Monday (June 15th), is set to add the final 8.3 miles of elevated roadway to extend from inside the flood protection system in Golden Meadow through the existing overpass and elevated highway in Leeville.

"The awarding of INFRA funds to the LA 1 project places the final piece of the puzzle that been put together by the State, Parish, Port Commission, and Industry Stakeholders," Greater Lafourche Port Commission Executive Director **Chett Chiasson** said. "This is an excellent example of what hard work and perseverance by all levels of government can do and we are proud to have been a part of it. The future of our community and economy is bright with the reliable, safe access this project will provide."

The significance of the announcement cannot be understated, as each day LA 1 is closed cost the U.S. **\$46 million in oil and gas production** and **\$528 million in total GDP**.

Considering the impacts experienced from frequent flooding events, the project has taken on even more importance in recent years, as seen with 2019's Hurricane Barry, and this year's Tropical Storms Cristobal and Beta, and Hurricanes Marco and Laura.

These particular storms caused access to Port Fourchon to be shuttered for nearly 100 hours due to the closure of LA 1 immediately south of the **Leon Theriot Lock** to where the current elevated stretch of highway begins in Leeville.

These disruptions to the critical commerce that flows in and out of Port Fourchon has and continues to affect our nation's energy security.

According to Chiasson, when completed, the final leg of

the elevated highway will allow for prompt return to the Port following storms and prevent delays in traveling down to Port Fourchon during high-water events that can be caused by severe thunderstorms, a persistent south wind or simply the passage of a strong cold front.

"Obviously, this would change everything for us and our tenants," Chiasson said. "While access and operations would be curtailed at the time of landfall, the business of the Port itself could resume rapidly if it weren't for the low-lying flooding that we currently experience on the unelevated portion of LA 1."

The hope is construction will commence sometime next year with the lifespan of the project lasting about seven years with completion coming around 2027.

The INFRA grant award provides the much-needed portion of the financial package necessary to complete the estimated \$445 million project. Additional funding will come via \$260 million allocated from the state, and a combined \$50 million from the GLPC, Lafourche Parish Government, and private sources.

The GLPC share of this is **\$25 million (or 5.6-percent)** of the total project cost split out in to \$5 million payments over the next five years.

It must be emphasized that this grant is for new construction and **DOES NOT** affect the current toll for the bridge portion of the first phase of elevated highway in Leeville stretching southward to Port Fourchon.

"The toll that is accessed pays back the bonds and TIFIA loan that the state secured for the bridge that was constructed back in 2009," Chiasson said.

While the toll for the bridge will remain in force for the foreseeable future, **NO** additional tolls will be added, as the financial package attached to the final leg of the highway **WILL NOT** require any loans or new taxes levied of state residents to be used for its construction. ●



# COMMISSIONER SPOTLIGHT

For nearly 30 years, Larry Griffin has served on the Board of Commissioners of the Greater Lafourche Port Commission (GLPC).

"It's just a pleasure to be on the board," he shared. "We work together. You don't see any fighting; we all agree to disagree. And that's what I like about it."

Griffin, a native of Golden Meadow, shared how much he enjoyed growing up in his hometown. "It was great," he said. "Everybody knows everybody. That's what I love about it; it's one big happy family."

A fisherman and oil field worker for nearly all his life, Griffin decided to run for the Board of Commissioners because he felt he could be an asset to Port Fourchon with the knowledge he gained working in his industries. He was elected out of a group of eight candidates who were running for the seat.

Since Griffin joined GLPC in 1992, Port Fourchon and the South Lafourche Leonard Miller Jr. Airport, which the Board is entrusted to ensure the progress and continued development of, have achieved rapid growth and other great successes.

When reflecting on the achievements he has witnessed, Griffin said it's "unbelievable" and "amazing."

Griffin also added that he's looking forward to further expansion of Port Fourchon and natural gas operating out of the port in the next three to four years.

What he is most proud of, Griffin noted, is the ability of Fourchon to create so many jobs for people from out of state and in Louisiana -- especially local residents. "We provide a lot of work for people who otherwise would have been out of work," he said. "That was one of my goals: to make some jobs available." ●



**Larry Griffin**  
Board Member

## ***State of The Port continued***

Port Fourchon operational throughout cleanup and waterway closures. We spent countless hours meeting and planning, coordinating breach closures and ways to continue keeping **Belle Pass**, the port's main waterway, open even though oil was approaching. When we knew that it was only a matter of time before we saw oil impacting our coast, we offered the GLPC's Port Fourchon Operations Center for response collaboration efforts. At that point, our Ops Center became the Lafourche Parish Emergency Operations Center for the oil spill response. Our approach to the response was not one of "us against them," but one of "How can we help?", and that proved to be very successful. The collaborative group in the Lafourche EOC was comprised of the United States Coast Guard, BP, Governor's Office of Homeland Security, Louisiana National Guard, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Lafourche Parish Government, Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office, Port Fourchon Harbor Police, and GLPC executives. I bring all this back up as a reminder that there are unfortunate things that happen, but it is the way we all respond that shows who we are. I am proud of the work that we did in response to this tragic event and serves as an example of what the GLPC and its Staff will continue to do when faced with adversity in the future.

Having moved past this event and dealing with other issues during the past decade have been challenging, but nonetheless, our GLPC board and its dedicated employees are continuing to press forward with many positive projects planned for the future, including the completion of the elevated portion of LA 1 that serves as the featured story in this edition of our quarterly newsletter.

Obviously, with the emergence of **COVID-19** this year, the GLPC, Port Fourchon, and its tenants and users have been on a rollercoaster ride. Personally, it has been an enormous learning experience to operate during these uncertain times, but I must say I couldn't be prouder of our board and our employees for how they've continued to succeed despite these difficulties. I can certainly say that we at the GLPC stand ready and able to tackle any challenge that comes our way. We always do this with the mindset of what is best for our community. That is why in looking toward the future, we plan to continue to expand Port Fourchon, and the South Lafourche Leonard Miller, Jr. Airport with projects ranging from the development of Fourchon Island to the construction of an Airport Corridor Connector and Bridge that will bring additional commerce to the 10th Ward and Port Fourchon. The issues we currently face with the **COVID-19** **WILL** be resolved, and we stand poised to capitalize on the activity that will follow. We will continue to support our tenants in every way possible as a sign of appreciation for the prosperity that they have given to our community. ●

## IMPORTANT VISITORS



**GLPC Executive Director Chett Chiasson** welcomed the newly appointed **Lafourche Parish Government Director of Grants & Economic Development Kristi Lumpkin** on Wednesday, **Aug. 5th**. During her visit, Lumpkin received a boat tour of Port Fourchon where she learned more about the Port and its many tenants and users. As we always do, the GLPC looks forward to collaborating with our parish partners and Ms. Lumpkin in order to foster a relationship that helps us market our area to prospective businesses moving forward. ●