



# FOURCHON

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## 65 Years Strong

# THE PORT MESSENGER

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## GREATER LAFOURCHE PORT COMMISSION, PORT FOURCHON TURNS 65 THIS YEAR

Unquestionably the biggest success story in the history of Lafourche Parish can be found in Port Fourchon.

So, how did Port Fourchon transform from a speck of land in southern Lafourche to hosting a valued tenant base that services nearly 100% of all deepwater offshore energy activity in the U.S. Gulf of America?

Through grit and determination by Louisiana State Senator A.O. Rappelet and a multitude of dedicated commissioners, that's how.

In 1960, Rappelet helped pass legislation to create the Greater Lafourche Port Commission (GLPC), which in turn established the area now known as modern-day Port Fourchon.

### A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Rappelet, unlike many of his counterparts, saw the potential in putting a port at the mouth of Bayou Lafourche to lure the banana trade from New Orleans to Lafourche Parish.

At first, the plan was simple: bring the banana trade to South Lafourche and let everything else build up around it.

While Rappelet missed the boat on bananas, both literally and figuratively, his insights regarding Fourchon's location helped the infant port become a "Port of the Future." Rappelet did this specifically by building infrastructure and clearing channels to support a burgeoning oil and gas industry.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS KEY

Although Rappelet played the most prominent role in establishing GLPC, future development of any port costs money.

Residents of Lafourche's 10th Ward voted to approve a property tax in 1961 to fund development at Port Fourchon, as has become customary from a self-reliant culture—the very same which taxed themselves to build the highly-durable protective levees seen today in south Lafourche.

**"AS THE PORT FORGES FORWARD INTO ITS 65TH YEAR, THE DILIGENT EFFORTS OF GLPC'S COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF SEEK TO KEEP CONTRIBUTING TO THE ECONOMIC NEEDS OF LAFOURCHE PARISH."**

These tax dollars paved the way for the donation of property along Bayou Lafourche in Fourchon to the commission in 1963. The Caillouet Family, Louisiana Land & Exploration (now ConocoPhillips), the Constantine family, and the Wisner Land Trust partnered with GLPC over the years to help make up the footprint of land that it currently owns or manages.

# STATE OF THE PORT



## UPDATE ON WHERE WE ARE IN 2025

BY CHETT CHIASSON, GLPC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I begin each address, I hope all of you are doing well at this point in the new year.

With the recent presidential election behind us, we are now fully entrenched in working with the new administration to pursue goals that align with our vision for the Greater Lafourche Port Commission and Port Fourchon.

Several meaningful policy changes approved through executive orders have already assisted us greatly in moving forward with projects and day-to-day operations in our port.

Furthermore, we are thrilled to see an emphasis being placed on the newly named **GULF OF AMERICA** and the energy production it has and will continue to yield for many years to come.

Indeed, it is nice to see a prominent display board with the Gulf of America sitting right behind the desk of President Donald J. Trump in the Oval Office.

We take this as a direct, pointed message from the administration that they deeply respect the workers of our region who help provide this country with the American energy it needs 365/24/7.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank our Board of Commissioners for their efforts as we celebrate our 65th anniversary in 2025.

Along with their diligence in governing what happens within our agency and Port Fourchon, they also give back to our local community in ways both seen and unseen.

On a personal note, the Board of

Commissioners provide me with the ability to advocate on behalf of not only them, but our community at the many stops I make throughout the year.

One of those stops is our nation's capital where I recently testified at the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Hearing entitled "Restoring Energy Dominance: The Path to Unleashing American Offshore Energy."

During my testimony I was able to elaborate on Port Fourchon's importance to the global energy marketplace, while calling attention to how the previous administration's policies decimated Gulf of America lease sales.

I focused on calling out Port Fourchon's role in servicing the energy industry, especially in the deepwater GoA.

This is far from the first time I have been asked to testify on Capitol Hill with each encounter being different than the last.

As is customary at these events, there are people in support of the topic being discussed and those who are not.

Even an opponent of drilling on the panel said the standards and practices used by American companies were safer and cleaner than anywhere else on the globe.

This should never escape the consciousness of the American public as we look to bolster production in the Gulf of America, not restrict it through

inept policies enacted previously that would prefer to import oil from hostile countries that don't share our same beliefs when it comes to the safe extraction of the product itself.

I would like to especially thank House Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Bruce Westerman (R - Arkansas), Subcommittee Chair Pete Stauber (R - Minnesota), and Clay Higgins (R - Louisiana) among others for their invitation to speak at this worthwhile hearing.

The overwhelming message I want to send here is the Greater Lafourche Port Commission and Port Fourchon are doing what we always do, which is moving forward.

We remain excited about the prospects for our port and region during an unparalleled moment of renewed optimism that can be felt and seen in tangible ways ranging from more favorable policies to even a rebranding of the economic arm of the Bayou Region.

Formerly referred to as the South Louisiana Economic Council, this entity is now called Colab.

I have the distinct honor of serving on Colab as its Board Chairman, and can honestly say our best days as a parish and region are ahead of us.

We believe we are a prime destination for business growth, innovation, and quality of life.

With this said, I firmly believe Port Fourchon sits on the forefront of all this thanks to us being the main economic driver of the Bayou Region.

By 1965, the clamshell Fourchon Road was constructed and readied for traffic.

#### DREDGING CHANNELS, ELECTED BODY, AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS SPUR GROWTH

Making Belle Pass have 12 feet of depth and electing what is still the state's only elected port commission in 1971 started the port down the path of becoming a legitimate economic asset to Lafourche Parish.

During a span of eight years stretching from 1971 to 1979, capital improvement projects began thanks to bond proceeds.

With this, a crucial environmental impact study was funded, and GLPC's first Executive Director was hired.

While all of these were positive developments, building up infrastructure and making an area attractive to businesses. Residents of Lafourche's 10th Ward voted to approve a property tax in 1961 to fund development at Port Fourchon, as has become customary from a self-reliant culture—the very same which taxed themselves to build the highly-durable protective levees seen today in south Lafourche.

You still need someone to take that first leap of faith.

Enter the port's first major tenant, Martin Fuel, in 1979.

Next up, the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) begins its operations in 1981, two years before the oil bust of 1983.

Now many would think the oil bust would have destroyed any chances Port Fourchon had at becoming anything significant, but they'd be wrong.

Thanks to the oil bust and the industry's need to consolidate, the centralized location of Port Fourchon, dipping into the gulf as the southernmost city accessible by road in south Louisiana, was the thing that gave the port its ultimate footing.

After developing the 400-acre E-Slip in 1984, businesses, primarily Edison Chouest Offshore, flocked to the port to become tenants.

Transportation grants and investments, made as a result of tax dollars tagged to Port Fourchon, saw the port grow as lease revenues started to climb into the millions of dollars.

#### DEEPWATER ROYALTY RELIEF ACT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Passed in 1995, this singular piece of legislation established the necessary incentives for the drilling industry to

go all in on exploratory activities in the Gulf of America.

By 1998, the E-Slip project was completely leased 15 years ahead of schedule.

This exceptional growth led to further construction and the purchase of the South Lafourche Airport by the commission in 2001.

Total budgets continued to climb during this same time period and revenues eclipsed the \$10 million mark by 2004, with nearly 250 companies operating from and/or utilizing Port Fourchon by 2005.

All these developments led to the construction of a new elevated highway that opened in 2009, one year before the port's second Executive Director, Chett Chiasson, was hired.



#### DISRUPTION COMES IN THE FORM OF DISASTER ON TWO FRONTS

Between the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill incident of 2010 and the price of oil and gas bottoming out in 2014, GLPC saw some dark days.

As a service provider to deepwater offshore energy interests in the Gulf of America, the temporary drilling ban that resulted from the oil spill incident, and then the resulting drop in O&G prices four years later, a negative tenor regarding future prosperity at the port was certainly a concern.

However, thanks to steadfast guidance and lowering rental rates for existing tenants to entice them to stay the course, Chiasson and the GLPC Board of Commissioners were able to steer Port Fourchon in a direction where growth continued despite the odds seemingly being stacked against them.

#### STRONGER NOW THAN EVER; POISED FOR THE FUTURE

With more than 83,000 linear feet of bulkhead now encompassing the footprint of Port Fourchon and lease revenues in the millions of

dollars, it's easy to see why GLPC has the reputation of being the main economic engine for Lafourche Parish.

As the port forges forward into its 65th year, the diligent efforts of GLPC's commissioners and staff seek to keep contributing to the economic needs of Lafourche Parish through forward-thinking measures set on creating more jobs and prosperity for the bayou region.

Currently, GLPC is positioned well to capitalize on numerous opportunities moving forward.

For starters, work continues to progress towards procuring the necessary approvals to eventually dredge to 50 feet in Belle Pass. That water depth will allow for the future development of Fourchon Island, which will one day become the home to a deepwater rig, repair, and refurbishment facility which will certainly spur on further investments in our port and parish.

Of further importance, a future LNG project continues to inch closer to becoming a reality. This project has the potential to be an investment in the billions of dollars.

Additionally, work continues on the Airport Bridge and Connector Road Project. Also being planned is the eventual construction of a new bridge in Port Fourchon to replace the one that was removed in 2018.

When combined with the ongoing construction of Phase 2 of the LA 1 Elevated Highway, the public and private investments mentioned above amount to roughly multiple billions coming into the 10th Ward of Lafourche Parish in the coming years.

#### MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME IN CELEBRATORY FASHION

The GLPC is excited to commence its year of celebration with a series of events geared towards our tenants and users, both at our airport and Port Fourchon.

Without our exceptional tenants and users, the airport and Port Fourchon would fail to achieve all it has in these last 65 years.

While these first two celebrations focus on our tenants and users, the grand finale will happen on **Saturday, May 17th** at the GLPC Administrative Office in Cut Off.

This free event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and feature food, music, Fourchon goodies and a first-come, first-served opportunity to board buses for port tours throughout the duration of the celebration.

# GLPC BOARD SUPPORTS COMMUNITY WITH AGREEMENT



Heading into the new year, the Board of Commissioners at the Greater Lafourche Port Commission has continued its mission to support the local community through meaningful sponsorship agreements.

The latest example is an \$8,000 agreement where South Lafourche High School, Golden Meadow Middle School, and Larose Cut-Off Middle School have placed GLPC signage at their respective gyms, stadiums, and fields.

This agreement builds on a previous one that has been renewed several times where GLPC signage is displayed prominently at the Larose Civic Center, Cut Off Youth Center, and Golden Meadow Park.

The current members of the board (John "T-John" Melancon, Jr., President; Kris Callais, Vice President; Harris "Chuckie" Cheramie, Jr., Secretary;

Rodney J. Gisclair, Sr., Treasurer; Jimmy "T-Jim" Lafont, Mike Callais, Reggie Ledet, Thomas "Tom" Pitre III, and Chad Callais) are collectively responsible for giving back to their community and Lafourche Parish in ways both big and small.

The ability to forge ahead with agreements such as this most recent one and others stems from a disciplined approach to dealing with budgetary funds.

Along with developing thoughtful and productive relationships with the valued tenants and users of Port Fourchon, the board has also shown its compassion to the 10th Ward of Lafourche Parish in other ways.

These efforts included raising thousands of dollars as a board to donate to a local non-profit following Hurricane Ida as well as volunteering time to cook food and hand-out

much-needed supplies in the storm's aftermath.

The Board of Commissioners has made it abundantly clear through words and deeds that they won't stop here, as they seek additional ways to further assist the community, non-profits, and others moving forward in the years to come.

The Greater Lafourche Port Commission, a political subdivision of the state of Louisiana, facilitates 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. The Port Commission exercises jurisdiction over the 10th Ward of Lafourche Parish, south of the Intracoastal Waterway, including Port Fourchon and the South Lafourche Leonard Miller, Jr. Airport (GAO).

# FORMER NBA COACH AND PLAYER SHOWS COMMUNITY LOVE DURING PODCAST

In a recently aired Sports Spectrum Podcast hosted by Matt Forte and Jason Romano, Forte interviewed former NBA player and New Orleans Hornets/Pelicans head coach Monty Williams.

Forte, a Slidell native and legendary Tulane/Chicago Bears running back, talked about places Williams had been through the years when the conversation turned to a familiar location in South Louisiana that we all know and love.

Williams, who led New Orleans to the playoffs twice during the early-mid 2010s, made sure to sing the praises of the 10th Ward of Lafourche Parish throughout this lengthy discussion.

During the discussion, which can be found by visiting Sports Spectrum on YouTube and typing in Monty Williams in the search bar, Williams talks about his time in New Orleans and how he developed a real affinity for the fishing and people from down the bayou.



"It is the coolest place on Earth. I love going down to Golden Meadow and Port Fourchon. It is a really cool place that's really special in my heart," Williams said.



## AIRPORT WINS BIG WITH CUSTOMERS LEADING UP TO BIG GAME

Being one of the top General Aviation (GA) airports in Louisiana doesn't happen by accident, it's an earned distinction that is owed to quality tenants and users as well as a staff of employees who flawlessly service planes that land and depart daily from the South Lafourche Leonard J. Miller, Jr. Airport.

According to a 2022 Louisiana study, the South Lafourche Airport employed 632 people and accounted for an economic impact of nearly \$119 million.

In the lead-up to Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans, the airport hosted a number of private planes and jets from all over the country.

Based on the feedback gathered by our staff and others, these visitors were left thoroughly impressed and satisfied with the services they received at the airport.

# INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS PROGRESSING NICELY



**LA 1 BRIDGE, ELEVATED HIGHWAY  
PHASE 2 CONSTRUCTION**



**SOUTH LAFOURCHE AIRPORT  
BRIDGE AND CONNECTOR  
ROAD CONSTRUCTION**



**SLIP D BULKHEAD CONSTRUCTION**



**SOUTH LAFOURCHE AIRPORT  
TERMINAL CONSTRUCTION**





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## GREATER LAFOURCHE PORT COMMISSION BOARD:

John "T-John" Melancon, Jr. – President, Seat G

Kris Callais – Vice President, Seat I

Harris "Chuckie" Cheramie, Jr. – Secretary, Seat A

Rodney J. Gisclair, Sr. – Treasurer, Seat D

Jimmy "T-Jim" Lafont – Board Member, Seat C

Mike Callais – Board Member, Seat H

Reggie Ledet – Board Member, Seat E

Thomas "Tom" Pitre III – Board Member, Seat B

Chad Callais, Board Member, Seat F