

## Once again, America is reminded of Louisiana's value

By: Christian Moises, News Editor | May 10, 2010 | 0

During Hurricane Katrina, most of the world was focused on the devastation in New Orleans.

While there was coverage of the devastation in surrounding parishes, such as Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany, it was minimal.

Now southeast Louisiana is faced with another disaster, and the importance of New Orleans' neighbors is back in the spotlight.

Louisiana's seafood industry has an estimated annual value of \$2.4 billion. The majority of that industry, at least in the southeastern quadrant of the state, is based in Jefferson, Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes.

Joan Strohmeier's story tells it all.

Staff writer Richard A. Webster visited with her and other Venice hotel owners last week to see what impact the oil leak from the Deepwater Horizon rig explosion had on their business.

In addition to 100 percent occupancy rates since about a week after the explosion, Strohmeier and her counterparts said it was nice to have the light shine on Plaquemines Parish, which, she says, was largely ignored after Katrina despite its devastating effects on the area.

"Now people are finally finding out that there is a Venice," Strohmeier said. "We're hoping that after this is all over, some of these people will come back or tell their friends about us. For as long as I can remember, we've been trying to let the rest of the world know about our fishing, and I think now people may understand how important it is."

But Strohmeier may be wrong. The majority of Americans still don't realize the importance of the Louisiana's fishing community or the other resources the state provides.



### COMPLETE OIL LEAK COVERAGE

A majority of the nation knows oil and seafood are two important products that come out of Louisiana. But what many people may not know is what these industries, the state and its residents have gone through so the rest of the country can enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Louisiana cannot be considered the nation's wasteland.

While Louisiana officials are responsible for allowing the marshland to be cut up to provide easier access to our ports, the rest of country benefits at our expense.

Think of how many goods flow through southeast Louisiana destined for other parts of the nation. New Orleans is the fifth-largest port in the United States. Don't forget the Port of South Louisiana and Port Fourchon, the latter of which is the entry point for about 20 percent of the country's oil supply.

The Gulf Coast provides 70 percent of the nation's oysters, and many of Baltimore's famed blue crabs actually come from Louisiana. The total seafood industry has a \$2.4 billion impact on the state each year.

Louisiana is the nation's No. 1 producer of crude oil and No. 2 producer of natural gas when including Gulf of Mexico operations. The industry has a \$70 billion impact on the state annually.

Our elected officials have been fighting the federal government for years to obtain more royalties from the oil found and produced off our coast. Why should Louisiana continue to do all the work and get none of the reward?

It's time our federal government recognizes the contributions the Bayou State makes to the rest of the country and the beating it takes to provide those resources.

It's time to stop questioning Louisiana's value and make sure we have the necessary infrastructure and funds to rebuild and secure our coast to continue providing these resources.

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