

Committee on Resources

Full Committee

Witness Statement

2110 Mary Hughes Drive
Houma, Louisiana 70363

April 27, 1999

The Honorable Members of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressmen:

My name is Daniel Snyder. I am a seventh grade student at Oaklawn Jr. High in coastal Houma, Louisiana. I was invited by Representative Billy Tauzin to testify at this hearing because of my participation in the National Coastal Wetlands Summit, where I read a letter to which asked him to support legislation for funding of coastal erosion projects. I am speaking to you this morning because I, my friends, my family, and everyone in coastal Louisiana is in danger of losing our homes and livelihoods to erosion. If nothing is done to stop the erosion of the wetlands then in fifty years, Houma, an inland city, will become a new port for huge ships, perhaps a major port like Port Fouchon in Lafourche parish.

In Houma, the Chamber of Commerce, the Terrebonne Parish School Board, and the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary have gotten together and come up with a S.O.S. campaign, or Save Our Soil. This year's project was to send letters to all members of Congress to obtain support of House Bills 701 and 798 sponsored by Representative Tauzin and Senate Bill 25 sponsored by Senators Landrieu, Lott, and others.

The intent of House Bill 798, "Permanent Protection for America's Resources" is to fund projects dedicated to this purpose. Since Louisiana loses one football field of land every 15 minutes, the residents of coastal Louisiana, especially Terrebonne Parish, are in complete support of this bill. Some projects like the Atchafalaya Basin Projects have proven to rebuild wetland areas. My parish, which is situated on a degenerating delta of the Mississippi River requires protection by our barrier islands.

These islands are literally washing away. Presently, there are several sand and grass restoration projects occurring at Wine Island and other barrier islands. House Bill 798 would provide continued funding for these initiatives and additional future projects. House Bill 701, "Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999" insures a percentage of revenues received from offshore continental shelf drilling would be returned to the coastal states. With these monies, projects such as the ones I have already mentioned can find state funding in addition to federal funding.

If this erosion of wetlands is not stopped, then when hurricane season comes, salt water from the gulf will pour into the freshwater wetlands and kill most of the immature seafood in our marshes, thereby shutting down seafood industries, making sea- food workers lose their jobs, and making a majority of people in coastal areas of Louisiana to move elsewhere to look for jobs and a place to live.

My family has lived here for several generations. I would like to raise my future family here because I value my heritage, culture, and lifestyle. This is the only home I know, and it sorrows me greatly that it is vanishing before my very eyes. I want to know that my children and their children will be able to enjoy the same rich culture and lifestyle that I have had the privilege to have.

In conclusion, we do not want to move from this area where we have our homes, and our livelihoods, and our culture has prospered. Please help us to Save Our Soil.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel Snyder,
Oaklawn Jr. High Student
Terrebonne Parish School System

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