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Charlotte A. Randolph, Parish President

PRESS RELEASE

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Parish Officials Address Concerns Over DFIRMs *New Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps Suggest* *South Lafourche Levee System is below Federal Standards*

Lafourche Parish President Charlotte Randolph and Windell Curole, General Manager of the South Lafourche Levee District, addressed local business leaders and other officials on Tuesday regarding the concerns over the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) being presented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for adoption. The main point of discussion was the exclusion of the South Lafourche Levee System as adequate flood protection. The address was the keynote of a breakfast meeting hosted by the Chamber of Lafourche & the Bayou Region.

Exclusion of the levee system on the DFIRMs would force much higher elevation standards for homes and businesses erected in the Parish in the future. This would also mean that a large majority of existing homes and businesses within the levee system would be below the new elevation standards. This leads to concern about the rise of flood insurance costs for these structures, but FEMA has indicated possessing a flood insurance policy *before* these maps are finalized will ensure the rate will not increase due to the DFIRM elevations.

“The best advice we can give residents who are concerned about this is to go out and get flood insurance now,” said Curole. “We have a good, solid system, but even the best levee system could be overtopped by a powerful storm.”

Curole also suggested that the DFIRM maps show overly conservative elevations due to being created directly after Hurricane Katrina. He believes the devastation the storm caused led to overly conservative models testing the ‘Hundred-Year Storm’, which is the basis for the DFIRM elevations. Curole, Randolph and other local officials have been working with the state and FEMA on this issue since the entire process originally started.

“We are going to appeal to have changes made to these maps,” added President Randolph. “We are working with the state through the LRA (Louisiana Recovery Authority) to have new studies completed which will show what we already know: that the South Lafourche Levee System is not only adequate, but perhaps the model system from which others should be built.”

FEMA is requiring adoption of the final DFIRMs. Any parish that fails to adopt the final DFIRMs faces exclusion from the National Flood Insurance Program as well as exclusion from federal funding. This would mean no federal funding for local projects and no funding for disaster recovery, such as FEMA funding for individuals affected by storms.

“The consequences for not adopting these maps in the end are so extreme that we will be left with little choice,” said Randolph. “That’s why we are working so hard with the state to do everything we can to make our appeals heard and get the necessary changes made.”

The LRA is planning an appeal for all coastal areas during the allotted “90-day Appeal and Protest Period” allotted by FEMA during this process. The DFRIM Committee of the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority will discuss this topic at today’s meeting scheduled for 2:00 P.M. at the State Capitol Building in Baton Rouge. Representatives of the LRA will be on hand for a presentation of the implications of these maps.

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