



P.O. Box 425 | Mathews, LA 70375
Telephone 985.537.7603 | Fax 985.532.8292



Charlotte A. Randolph, *Parish President*

Office of Emergency Preparedness

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10:20 A.M.
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Lafourche Parish Declares State of Emergency Due to Gulf Oil Spill *Measures Being Taken to Protect Local Marsh Areas; Fourchon Beach Closed*

With oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill inching further westward, Parish President Charlotte Randolph has declared a State of Emergency for Lafourche Parish. Fourchon Beach has been closed to the public until further notice. Officials from Lafourche Parish Government as well as the Greater Lafourche Port Commission are working on the local response along with BP, the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Guard. Officials met Friday morning to discuss plans for protecting the Lafourche Parish coastal marsh areas.

“We decided our best option right now is to use our sandy beaches as a natural barrier to protect our wetlands from the oil,” said President Randolph. “It’s a lot easier to clean oil off the beach than out of the marsh, so we are working to close off all breaches along our coast where the beach has been washed away.”

On Sunday, truckloads of sand were being delivered to Port Fourchon to be placed in large sandbags which will be dropped local by National Guard helicopters in five areas along the southeast parish coast where the beachfront is washed away. Over the years, hurricanes and tropical storms helped erode the beach in these areas, leaving a direct opening to the marsh. Once these areas have been sandbagged, it will leave approximately 15 miles of solid beachfront to help protect the marsh.

“Other than protecting the marsh, access in and out of Port Fourchon and Bayou Lafourche is obviously our other major concern,” said Chett Chiasson, Executive Director of the Greater Lafourche Port Commission. “If necessary, our current strategy is to place boom along Belle Pass in Bayou Lafourche to create a “decontamination station” for ingress and egress through the port.”

Local officials have been working closely with officials from BP, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) since the beginning of this incident. Parish President Randolph has also been speaking daily with President Barack Obama as well as Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal to keep them apprised of Lafourche Parish’s concerns. Last week, Lafourche Parish Government submitted its official plan to BP officials for approval.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been activated at the Mathews Government Complex. For assistance, please call the EOC at (985) 532-8174.

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