

**Testimony of Mr. Henri Boulet**  
**Executive Director**  
**Morganza Action Coaliton**

**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**  
**Legislative Hearing on Offshore Drilling**  
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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Honorable Committee Members. My name is Henri Boulet. I serve as the Executive Director of the Morganza Action Coalition which seeks to promote federal authorization and funding of the [Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection System](#). I am a native of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana where I grew up along the banks of Bayou Lafourche, which is a distributary of the Mississippi River that runs down to the Gulf of Mexico. My family made our living along the coast, farming freshwater crawfish for six months out of the year, and shrimping along the saltwater coast of the Gulf of Mexico the other six months. For the last 15 years, I have worked with our local, state and federal governments alongside the seafood, energy and tourism industries advocating for the building of resilient infrastructure projects for our community— building resilient elevated highways to our working coast, and building environmentally conducive levee systems to protect our citizens homes and businesses from storm system impacts – all at the end of the day to make my Cajun French community far more resilient for our future.

As our country and our community recognizes the energy transition, I would like to discuss the leadership role that Louisiana is playing in significant environmental benefits when utilizing GOMESA federal revenue sharing funds to complement our state and local funds expended on our state's coastal master plan.

The Morganza-to-the-Gulf 96-mile Levee System is the first federally authorized major "Leaky Levee" system in the USA. I say "leaky" because we have our 14th navigable floodgate under construction and have built 9 environmental structures along 60 miles of levees with only state and local funding. Under this system, the wetlands on the protected sided of the levee system stay wet from fresh water strategically held to foster healthy wetlands. In the past 10 years we have evidence of eroded marshes come back to life, with the bald eagle population bustling to an estimated 300 eagles nesting in Terrebonne Parish alone. Environmental groups have recently planted thousands of cypress trees in this area. Without GOMESA funding of these levees and structures, this area would now be under 3 ft. of open salt water.

Within the levee system sits the Houma Navigation Canal Lock Complex, with ecological, economic and protection benefits, among many others, to 200,000 residents and businesses receiving the resiliency benefits of the levee system. As a means to address the severe saltwater intrusion continuously affecting the region's drinking water supply as far north as Houma, Louisiana, the Houma Navigation Canal Lock Complex project was conceived and design with far-reaching environmental benefits by distributing freshwater into the basin and keeping salt

water at bay, but also making critical accommodations for the maritime business to continue to thrive along our working coast. This large-scale, multidimensional hydrologic restoration project provides numerous benefits by incorporating environmental, protection, navigation and commercial features; a great reflection of what Louisiana is doing with GOMESA revenue sharing funds leveraged with state funds and local levee districts funds.

None of this would be possible without the concentration of major assets of our energy industry that have developed in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, assets which we all must protect and prioritize following this weeks' pipeline shut-in events affecting our nation's energy security. Can you imagine if not only were our fossil fuel supply lines impacted by malicious foreign actors, but that the refineries that supply it could only get their oil from foreign suppliers too?

But that risk and the critical environmental projects at stake are exactly what the federal leasing moratorium have swept up. Already, GOMESA has been deprived of tens of millions of dollars from the cancellation of the March Gulf lease sale, and we have to assess that BOEM has not put out a notice or otherwise done anything to prepare for an August lease sale. Based on sale statistics from the past few years, these would have been anywhere from \$200 to \$300 million total to the federal government with anywhere between \$20-\$40 million to Louisiana alone to fund exactly the environmental projects I've been describing. Our environment has been deprived of that support – but why?

As stated, for many years I have advocated for resilient coastal infrastructure funding for our coast. Please don't try to tell me these dollars are going to be easily replaced with other federal funding; I already beg for that as part of my job. To not even let the region generate them ourselves is a double impact.

In closing, as our economy reopens and our world moves toward environmentally friendly produced energy, let us remember that under the most stringent environmental guidelines worldwide, the U.S. Gulf of Mexico is producing the lowest carbon footprint barrels of oil in the entire world. While many coastal communities around this country do not endorse offshore oil and gas production, Southeast Louisiana communities do, and we do it because oil & gas revenues finance our communities schools, public services, and our most significant resiliency efforts forward, such as the Morganza-to-the Gulf Levee Protection System. Families such as mine work in all three industry sectors – oil & gas, fisheries, and tourism. However, it is the partnership with our federal government through offshore revenue sharing that will determine our work forward in community resiliency and environmental protection and restoration of our working coast. We need this committee to hear us and help our coast to resume getting the help it needs immediately.