

ect is undertaken. The proposed channels are shown colored in red and the existing channels, South and Southwest Passes of the Mississippi River, in yellow. Note the vast number of productive oilfields and gasfields colored in green and the savings in time to navigate to these fields from Venice, the terminus of the highway and the oil and supply companies' base of operations. The many areas now under Federal mineral lease in the wildcat or early stages of development are in purple; and under State lease in brown. The development of these fields will substantially increase the use of these new channels.

Most of the oilfields within a radius of approximately 80 miles of Venice, including those fields from which the Federal Government will reap hundreds of millions of dollars in royalties in future years will be serviced from this area.

The two existing outlets into the gulf for vessels, South and Southwest Passes of the Mississippi River, are now very heavily traveled, creating navigational difficulties in the lower reaches of the Mississippi River and its passes during unfavorable weather conditions. The construction of these two proposed channels would siphon off a large percentage of the vessels servicing the fishing and mineral industries thus making ship travel in the river safer. The recent increase in ship and barge collisions causing death and untold millions of dollars in property damage will undoubtedly be greatly reduced if these channels are constructed.

The U.S. Coast Guard has recently secured a site for its operations at Venice. These new channels would greatly facilitate the Coast Guard by giving them quicker access to the east and west for their rescue and other operations.

Boat travel to the east between the Mississippi River at Venice and the existing Tidewater Channel through Breton Sound, shown in blue, will be greatly shortened thus facilitating the movement of bar and river pilots who navigate ships through both channels and will provide easy, quick, and money-saving transportation for the U.S. Corps of Engineers who maintain the passes at the mouth of the Mississippi River and the Tidewater Channel.

I recommend passage of this project.

Mr. Calvin Watts will file his statement for the record.

I think they are very expansive and informative. And I believe that both projects meet the criteria of approbation, which the Chair has given.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, for your kind consideration and understanding.

Thank you very much.

Mr. HARSHA. May I just make one suggestion, Congressman, that you use your considerable influence with the Bureau of the Budget to expedite their report to us. It will be helpful.

Mr. HÉBERT. I will do what I can with the Bureau of the Budget.

Mr. HARSHA. I am sure that will be fine.

Mr. HÉBERT. I would like to accept the adjectives in front. But I am afraid if the Bureau of the Budget comes through on this, it will be a magna cum laude proposition in spite of me.

Mr. BLATNIK. Thank you very much, Congressman, and gentlemen from the delegation, for your cooperation in the interest of time.

(The statement follows:)