

Mr. Chairman, these proposed navigation improvements are intended to increase the dimensions of the several streams encompassed by the project to a depth of 20 feet and a bottom width of 400 feet. The basic purposes of channel expansion to these large dimensions involves the urgent and, indeed, *critical* needs of the offshore oil industry which is bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the United States Treasury every year.

Local people, local interests and local industry have geared up to provide the petroleum companies with the huge drilling platforms needed to exploit the mineral resources of the Gulf floor in depths of several hundred feet of water. Proper development of these resources hinges on the ability of the industries of the area to transport these structures from the construction sites, through the channels of this project into the Gulf of Mexico—and back from the Gulf when they are in need of repair, modernization and working over.

However, the serious situation we face today is that there are structures being built in the Morgan City area which will have great difficulty in being transported through channels which have limiting depths of from only 8 to 12 feet and which have limiting widths of down to 140 feet.

For example, one of these drilling platforms which I have seen in the initial stages of construction and which will eventually be placed in about 350 feet of water is of such dimensions that when a 140 foot drilling rig is placed on top of it, the total structure will measure some 20 feet taller than the Washington Monument! It will have a base of almost the size of a football field and will weigh 6,500 tons. The committee can well understand the problems in moving such a structure and can visualize the channel requirements of such an operation.

But, Mr. Chairman, before this proposed project is actually realized, structures of even greater dimensions will be awaiting the day when they can be moved from the construction sites into the Gulf. There are existing federal leases offshore of Louisiana in 400 or even 500 feet of water, and the dimensions of the platforms which will be needed in this depth will be significantly larger than the one just described.

It is expected that a structure designed for use in 600 feet of water will be half again as tall as the Washington Monument with base dimensions of 400 feet. The problems of transporting such a structure are self-evident—as is the urgent need for this project.

The benefits to the government of offshore oil and gas operations are just as remarkable as are the dimensions of the offshore structures themselves. Last year, for instance, a lease sale in the Eastern section of Louisiana's Outer Continental Shelf brought more than \$500,000 into the Treasury. This is above and beyond the approximately \$300,000 realized by the Treasury from actual production from existing wells off the Louisiana coast.

The benefits to the local economy are expected to be just as noteworthy. My understanding from local employers of the area—mainly those who are fabricating the drilling structures—is that 4 to 5 *thousand* new jobs should be added to local payrolls once a certainty exists that any structure which needs to be built can be moved from the construction sites out into the Gulf.

This tremendous expansion of employment will be an economic blessing not only to the Morgan City area but to the whole South Central Louisiana area which I represent here in Congress. All of the parishes of my District will be called on to supply these labor requirements.

Under the circumstances, it should be quite apparent that we are dealing with a "blue chip" situation and that the returns to the Federal government, to the local economy, and to the affected industries will be many, many times the amount of the investment in expanding the channels in question.

The authorization and early funding of this project will represent a reinvestment of only a minute fraction of the income which the Federal government is enjoying from development of offshore petroleum and gas deposits adjacent to the Louisiana coast.

Finally, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, let me pay the highest sort of compliment to the many outstanding individuals and organizations of the Morgan City-Berwick area for all of the hard work and conscientious effort they have put forth in proving the absolute need and the incontrovertible justification for this project.

Without their enthusiasm, determination and support since June of 1964 when the Congressional Committee resolutions were adopted calling for a review of the reports on these streams, this effort could never have reached the stage it enjoys today.