



Environment and Infrastructure Segment of the E&I Policy Series  
Tuesday, April 20, 2010  
Church of the Redeemer  
Biloxi, MS

Panelists: Patty Whitney, Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing  
Casey DeMoss, Gulf Restoration Network

The Gulf Coast states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi experience an extremely high rate of land loss due to human intervention. While barrier islands and wetlands, coupled with levees, create the three tiers of defense necessary for adequate protection from hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, immediate action is needed to rebuild these natural defenses and to mitigate future disasters while protecting social, cultural and economic interest in coastal areas.

**Overarching Themes:**

- Displacement
- Port expansion that re-diverts Disaster CDBG away from affordable housing
- Richton Salt Dome
- Industrial Contamination

**Background Information and Framing:**

- States rights vs. federal responsibility
- Local contracts and employment
- Federal recognition of regional environmental systems
- As issues relate to whole communities, housing, head start/education, family services, displacement

**Advocacy:** The group discussed some advocacy strategies to advance our work

- Entitlement funds and disaster impact; community voice important
- How to share information? Before it hits
- Oversight and enforcement
- Advocates as activists. Sharing information and education
- Coalition of churches. Share information.
- Power in coalition

- Recognizing problems before they start
- Awareness and Education in community partner with local colleges
- Making social justice accessible, connected to popular culture
- Children's books, the arts
- Education initiatives connected to actions
- Local agency relationships
- Need Region 4 EPA Administrator

#### I. Displacement

- Need national guideline of community displacement, include displaced culture
- Flooding stigma in Hattiesburg (investment, etc. due to stigma) federal and other money redirected from certain areas. GIS Map.
- Funding and Education, E-List on government grants
- Documentation of blue roofs pre 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Measurement cultural diversity, individual displacement
- Talking points-ministerial alliance should be active across Coast. Educational Sessions
- Disparities from Pre-K
- Community Assessments-i.e. related to displacement
- Displacement of farms
- Paper Trail and Research Team for public money and local schools
- Collecting data/personal experience as tools to tell narrative.

#### II. Port expansion that re-diverts Disaster CDBG away from affordable housing

- Environmental impact of increase in ship traffic
- Port mis-information campaign: own presentations to city councils  
ED of Port Authority
  - a. Port-tied to economic development
  - b. State Justification/Opposition
    - i. Messaging: Community participation and city support
- Community Benefit Agreements
- Expanded railway- means housing money not there
- Levee La-Ms. Pearlinton to Slidell
- Pearlinton, priorities: sewer vs. housing rebuild
- Port: we want our money for affordable housing
- 50% of port money for minority and local contractors
- Communication in place and website campaign
- Legislation >50% jobs for low income people
- Successful education, training and licensure
- Training and licensing for "unqualified" workers

III. Richton Salt Dome

IV. Industrial Contamination

- Who else is working on the issue?
- Experienced by all communities, particularly communities of color