

SOUTHWEST CORNER CUT UPDATE

Just in case you missed all of the notices (pun intended), the Matagorda County Coastal Commission held a public hearing on Thursday, December 10th, 2009 at the Bay City Service Center to discuss the projects that the county wants to fund with federal money from the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) grant.

To his credit, Precinct 2 Commissioner Deshotels informed East Matagorda Bay Foundation (EMBF) Treasurer Ed Stavinoha of the hearing following the County Commissioners Court meeting the previous Monday. Stavinoha and EMBF Director Ed Kinney attended the hearing along with Sargent Area Chamber of Commerce (SACOC) President Claude "Tiger" Lane. Lane was only aware of the hearing because Stavinoha had informed him that the hearing was going to take place.

The meeting's agenda listed 9 projects to be discussed to receive the CIAP grant money. **ONLY ONE PROJECT, THE SOUTHWEST CORNER CUT, WAS DISCUSSED.** Eight people from Matagorda spoke in favor of the cut (guess they got the notice of the meeting). One of the speakers pointed out that the cut would increase tourism and boosts the economy (of Matagorda?). Stavinoha, from Sargent, voiced opposition to the cut. There is some question as to whether the cut project even qualifies for CIAP funding.

Over the years, Matagorda County has come up with several reasons for the cut including a fish pass to avoid fish kills during a freeze, flooding of FM 2031, increased flow at the mouth of the Colorado to keep the mouth of the river open, to reduce current flows at the locks on the Intracoastal Waterway, and to enhance East Matagorda Bay.

Texas Parks and Wildlife cannot justify the cut for the purpose of a fish pass and does not believe that East Matagorda Bay needs enhancing – it is doing just fine.

WHAT IS THE HIDDEN AGENDA?

Following the public hearing, the directors of the Matagorda County Coastal Commission met. Tiger Lane was in attendance. The directors voted to use the CIAP funds from 2007, totaling \$1,274,996, as follows:

Sargent Beach restoration-\$53,940; student understanding and appreciation of coastal issues-\$41,878; coastal issues conference-\$36,334; economy/ecology student project-\$32,193; Tres-Palacios study for beneficial use of dredge material-\$371,933; diversion dam by-pass cut-\$355,067; Southwest cut at East Matagorda Bay-\$155,004; Palacios multi-use nature site-\$139,609; administration costs-\$89,038

The directors then voted to use the CIAP funds from 2008, totaling \$1,274,996, as follows:

SOUTHWEST CUT AT EAST MATAGORDA BAY - \$1,274,996!!

EMBF is opposed to the Southwest Corner Cut in its present magnitude because the possibility exists that the hydrodynamics and salinity of the bay will be affected; overall reduction in the depth of the bay (the bay is higher than the Colorado River); possible shoaling of Mitchell's Cut.

WHY RISK RUINING THE LAST PRISTINE BAY ON THE GULF COAST!!

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)-Galveston District in the very near future will be releasing the public notice concerning the Southwest Corner Cut for comment. At that time it is important that written requests be made to the Corps for a public hearing. The requests need to state reasons for the public hearing.

Notice of the comment period and the procedures to follow will be published in this paper.

Remember, if the bay is ruined, fishermen will not have a reason to come to Sargent. Fishermen will not want to own property in Sargent. Property values will decline. If they aren't coming to Sargent think of the economic impact on the Sargent business community, the stores, the restaurants, and the watering holes.