

# Stay or go?

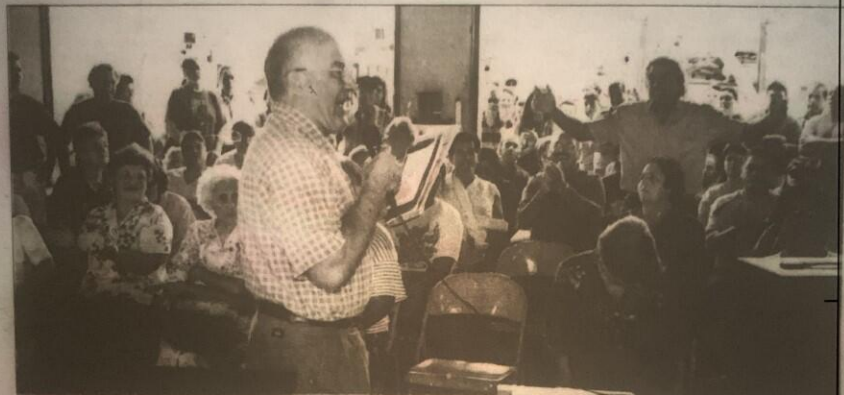


PHOTO BY KEN WOODRUFF FOR THE COURIER

"There's a hidden agenda, and it's going to come out," said the Rev. Roch Naquin, a retired Catholic priest and Isle de Jean Charles resident. "There's a lot of oil in this area. They're just waiting for ... people to move out."

## Island residents debate relocation

By ELIZABETH STUART  
 The Courier

**ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES** — Some residents say they would rather be carried away in coffins than sell their land and move off the island in a retreat from flooding and exposure to storms.

Others, however, say relocation is inevitable as the tiny island community in southwestern Terrebonne Parish continues to erode into the Gulf of Mexico.

More than 100 of the island's 277 residents filed the community's first petition Monday for a hearing conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

During the 2 1/2-hour meeting, residents

— some with neck veins bulging, some speaking in French — argued passionately for and against relocation. The suggestion emerged after the corps determined it would be too costly to include the area within the proposed \$690-million Morganza-to-the-Gulf hurricane-protection system.

Some residents claimed the plan would push the mostly poor, American Indian community off the island so rich sport fishermen can set up camps



Verret



A. Naquin

"There's a hidden agenda, and it's going to come out," said the Rev. Roch Naquin, a retired Catholic priest and island resident. "There's a lot of oil in this area. They're just waiting for ... people to move out."

He urged the corps to treat Isle de Jean Charles as a barrier island and to bolster it in save inland marshes from erosion.

Resident Percy Dardier says he doesn't want to accept any offer from the federal government for his land.

"They'll have to move me in a box, Dardier shouted. "But I'll tell you something else — there'll be a lot of other people in boxes also."

Other residents quietly conceded after the meeting that they would be relieved to leave Isle de Jean Charles, though they love their community. They said they are tired of toiling through decades of constant flooding and poor living conditions.

Chris Brunet said he must think realistically because the island is not going to stay washing away.

"I don't like it, but I've got to swallow it," Brunet said.

Doris Naquin and her husband, Tillman, ISLAND continues on B4

## Top Enron execs reaped \$744 million

By BRAD FOSS  
 The Associated Press

**NEW YORK** — In a disclosure that outraged former employees, Enron Corp. reported that 89 top senior managers were paid \$744 million in the year before the energy company's collapse, including more than \$120 million for former chairman Kenneth Lay.

Enron outlined the compensation in a filing late Monday with federal bankruptcy court in New York — documents that provide a glimpse into the company's finances as it spiraled into the biggest bankruptcy in the nation's history.

The large sums of payments and stock paid to the managers do not indicate any wrongdoing, former employees

show preferential payments were made before the bankruptcy, obstructing creditors from getting their fair share.

Representatives of former workers and shareholders responded angrily after the disclosure, accusing Enron's senior managers of essentially ransacking the company's coffers while leaving their clients with a

ENRON continues on B4

### NEW TRAFFIC LIGHTS



Nickelodeon to show special on

grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; two brothers, Ruffin LeBouef of Bayou Dularge and Russell LeBouef of Bayou Blue; and four sisters, Mrs.

Gonsoulin, Joseph and Alma; and Alton A. Gonsoulin Jr. of Houston; one sister, Grace

of the Propagation of Faith; and David Fournier, in charge of arrangements.

1110 Village St.  
Houma, aggravated battery (domestic violence);  
June 17, 2000  
Kimberly Lynn Dupre, 26, 222 Evelyn St.  
Houma, license is expired.  
Cassy Marie Prevost, 33, 5007 La. 1.  
Raceland, third offense DWI.

## ISLAND *Continued from 1A*

said they have already lost two cars and two homes to water damage during the 37 years they have lived on and near the island. They now live where the Island Road branches off from La. 665 in Pointe-aux-Chenes.

"They can relocate us somewhere else, I want to go," Doris said. "If we lose this (opportunity), we may never get it again. You have to have the wisdom to understand that this place is not going to save you."

### SAVING A CULTURE

Albert Naquin, chief of the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians, opened the meeting and reminded the crowd that island life as they knew it is slipping away. Many young residents leave Isle de Jean Charles for other opportunities, she said.

By relocating, he said, at least they'd stay together.

"The island community is dying. I know I didn't help matters either, but I was tired of driving in the water," said Albert Naquin, who now lives in Montegut. "We talk on how we want to keep our heritage and culture, but unless we can do something to keep our community together, it's a gone pecan."

"We have to look at an alternate plan to keep the community alive. I hate to say this, but maybe relocation is that alternative, with the right offer."

### IT'S THE PEOPLE

The most raucous objections to relocation

"We have to look at an alternative plan to keep the community alive. I hate to say this, but maybe relocation is that alternative, with the right offer."

**ALBERT NAQUIN, CHIEF OF THE ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES BAND OF BILOXI-CHITIMACHA-CHOCTAW INDIANS**

came from people who do not live on the island but own land or have family members there.

Morning Dove Verret, a native of Dularge and resident of Gretna, launched into a short speech in French, which she later summarized in English. She said the federal government has been pushing American Indians off their land for generations.

Verret said she does not want the way life her great-grandmother, Lucy Frank Foret, a midwife on Isle de Jean Charles, passed down to her children to disappear.

As corps officials insisted that benefits fall to outweigh the cost of including the island within the proposed levee system, residents' opposition grew louder.

"It's the people, not just the frickin' houses; it's the people," Verret shouted.

### FLOODING: THE ENEMY

Rodney Greenup, corps project manager for the Morganza project, told the audience that no one is forcing residents off the island.

"I can sympathize, but this is not the big, bad

government forcing you out," Greenup said.

No relocation would happen for at least a few years, only residents choose that route.

"Your only entry on this island is the flooding," he said. "We can't protect you from it."

It would cost more than \$100 million to include the island in the levee system, the corps says. It will cost about \$8 million to relocate the residents.

State Sen. Reggie Dupre, D-Montegut, tried to persuade the overwhelming number of anti-relocation voices Monday that they should not close themselves off to the idea.

"The Corps of Engineers is offering you some options," Dupre told the crowd, noting that the island will eventually erode into the Gulf. "You at least need to listen."

Only full-time residents of the Isle de Jean Charles will be considered for relocation.

"Right now, we're not looking at the camps," Greenup said, noting that the scope of any possible move could change once a study is under way. Greenup said it's the first such relocation proposed in south Louisiana, and it's still unclear

what kind of compensation or benefits would be granted to residents who move.

### WHO GETS THE OIL?

Many residents said they want to keep their oil-and-gas rights should they relocate.

"We're going to find a way to allow them to do that," Greenup said after the meeting.

Construction of the Morganza levee is years away, and because the corps usually compensates individual owners for their homes instead of relocating whole communities, putting a time-frame on relocation is difficult.

Corps officials passed around three conceptual drawings by a New Orleans consulting firm for subdivisions that could be built somewhere in Terrebonne Parish for the island residents who move:

- A 44-acre island concept that would accommodate 68 houses.

- A 37-acre Village Green concept accommodating 53 houses.

- A 52-acre Central Core concept, accommodating 63 houses.

About 96 percent of the island's residents are American Indians, most in the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe. About 100 wood-frame structures, most on pilings, line the only road in and out.

Should the island residents agree to move, the ultimate decision would be up to Congress. Authorization could come in November or December if it is approved in the Water Resources and Development Act.

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