

Michel Claudet, Terrabonne Parish President Interview Highlights

- ADM Rufe and ADM Moore interviewed Mr. Claudet in his office on Thursday, October 14.
- The Claudet interview was the polar opposite of the Nungesser interview.
- He had no major complaints; felt BP and USCG did a relatively good job.
- He received an immediate LNO from BP and USCG when the event started.
- From his perspective, there were problems getting leadership direction executed at the field level. Early on, he saw resources sitting around. Eventually, they got that taken care of.
- He thought there was not a very effective way of getting info to the average person.
- He stated that the Town Hall meetings were ineffective and that they were glorified shouting matches. He said that the Media would follow anyone who was outspoken at these meetings out to the parking lot to interview them since they knew they could get a good sound bite from them.
- When they started having round table meetings, which were more intimate discussions with BP or USCG, they were much more effective.
- It said part of the problem was the mental aspect of this response, "When a hurricane hits, it will be the worst day and every day after will be a little bit better. But with this event, it was the opposite, every day things got a little bit worse."
- Blessed with good OEP people in his Parish. They had good experience and realistic expectations. They knew that booming was not right answer. They were able to tell what the real issues were vs. the BS issues.
- He and his people were on daily calls, and felt that they were getting the info they wanted.
- He felt that they were able to get the resources they needed because they did not "ask for stupid stuff." He felt that since they knew how to respond to oil spills they had an advantage.
- He felt that the proximity to the ICP (i.e., the ICP was close by in Houma), that he could send his OEP person there for the morning briefs and have them come back quickly to report to him.
- He was very negative about people who postured in front of the media. He recounted a story about a call he got from Anderson Cooper. He was told to come and to bring an angry unemployed rig worker. He said that he could come, but cannot guarantee they would be "angry." He was then disinvited.
- He felt that the uninformed media made the response and the incident look worse than it was. For example, red fish travel in schools and come to the surface to feed. When they do this, the water practically boils while they are in this feeding frenzy. He said that someone caught this on tape, and said that the fish were doing this because they were dying from exposure to oil, even though there was no oil around.
- Federal government being in charge was correct; He has no problem with the NCP.
- He knew the difference between the Stafford Act and the NCP, and knew that the NCP was model for oil spill.
- He felt that the Parish's role should be informational and advisory to the response organization.
- He stated that the response organization somehow needs to have a venue/open door for the public to engage the response organization. He felt that this would take heat off of the elected officials and therefore lessen their demands on the response organization. He said that the public felt that there was no one other than the Parish Presidents that they could go to in order to get the info they wanted/needed.
- He had a tendency to not go and "set fires" through the media. He felt that stirring things up through the media was not a way to show effective leadership.
- He expressed an interest in being involved in pre-planning/ACP planning process going forward.
- He noted that all of the LA coastal area is an ESA. However, there were barrier islands that were identified as ESAs during the response, but estuaries were not (or were at least a lesser priority). Knew the barrier islands were going to be hit, but the estuaries were a concern.
- ADM Rufe and ADM Moore said that their take away was there needs to be better engagement of the locals in the planning process.

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