

## **21st International Conference of The Coastal Society**

### **A Case Study: A Fishers' Cooperative in Lower Plaquemines Parish as an Avenue for Integrating Social Equity into Coastal Management**

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The old economic systems that supported the fishing extraction business exploited traditional small family fishers. Between the excessive costs of provisions and low pay-outs for catch at the docks it was difficult for the small fisher to make ends meet. Since Katrina and Rita there have been excessive delays with the federal government and their assistance to the fishers through loans, through the debris removal and cleaning of water ways and the hauling of vessels off the land to the water. In the midst of this struggle there has been considerable encroachment of rural gentrification through development of vacation villages and sports recreation centers. Small family fishers, as well as their traditional ecological knowledge and culture, are at risk of extinction. The fishers of Grand Bayou, like other traditional family fishers of lower Plaquemines Parish are at risk of loss of livelihood, loss of place and loss of environment/wetlands. Collectively, the small fishers of lower Plaquemines have pooled their efforts to form a fishers cooperative that will address: fair practices of docks for supplies and marketing of their catch, thus providing a fair livelihood; secure location in the region by having a livelihood to support their families; and coastal erosion, restoration issues, hypoxia, and land loss affecting estuaries. This paper will present a case study and possibly a model for other communities who want to resist displacement and retain their presence and their livelihood as fishers.

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