



Bryan Stephens

**A Subsurface Structural Model for
Natural Subsidence Patterns in South Louisiana.**



Tuesday, March 18th
Andrea's - Metairie

Registration & Networking - 11:30 AM
Lunch and Talk - Noon

Reservations and guests: Carol St. Germain - 504-267-3466

Chairman's Column

Last month, Paul Lawless gave an excellent talk on the migration of hydrocarbons, as it relates to "resource plays" in various areas. As in the past, Paul's presentation was well documented with numerous visual exhibits. Thirty members and guests were present.

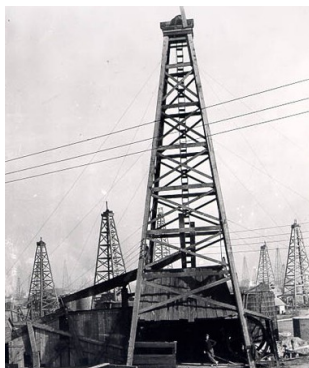
This month, Bryan Stephens with BOEMRE will discuss natural subsidence patterns in South Louisiana.

On the political scene, as the State Legislative session approaches, various radical environment groups, along with their media allies are hard at work to prevent any legislation which would derail the infamous "levee board" lawsuit. There's an old adage that the people who "shout the loudest on an issue are often those who don't know the facts or who don't care about the facts".

Make no mistake, the real motives behind these lawsuits are not flood protection or restoring the wetlands, but an effort to drive the energy industry out of Louisiana and at the same time "line the pockets" of a small group of trial attorneys. I urge everyone to stay updated on this issue, it is very important to the oil and gas industry.

Check to make sure you didn't overlook your spring dues payment.

Louis E. Lemarié



Bryan Stephens is a native of the New Orleans area. He holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Geology from the University of New Orleans and the University of Kansas. From 1985 to 1988 he worked in the Petroleum Research Section of the Kansas Geological Survey. From 1988 to 1999 he worked for Texaco in New Orleans on a variety of exploration and production assignments across the Gulf Coast and offshore Gulf of Mexico. He joined the Minerals Management Service (now the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) in 1999, where his primary responsibilities include Fair Market Value Determination of lease sale tracts in the deep-water Gulf of Mexico. Bryan's recent publications have sought to call attention to the geological forces confronting south Louisiana and the contributions that petroleum geoscientists can make toward understanding the challenges these natural processes pose to coastal restoration and sustainability. He is a member of AAPG and NOGS.

A Subsurface Structural Model for Natural Subsidence Patterns in South Louisiana.

Bryan P. Stephens

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Fundamental gaps remain in our understanding of the causes, rates and patterns of geologic subsidence and their implications for the sustainability of south Louisiana. The coastal landscape is the product of spatial and temporal variations in vertical movements, results of diverse processes which have interacted in an ordered structural framework throughout the geologic history of the Gulf Coast. Depth-migrated offshore 3D seismic surveys are revealing unprecedented views to depths below 40,000 ft and providing analogs for understanding this subsurface framework.

The basement fabric is the first-order control on coastal geomorphology. Ongoing movements of the basement have exerted a profound level of control on all superposed geological processes. Surface manifestations of ancient crustal boundaries are evident in the Holocene coastal landscape.

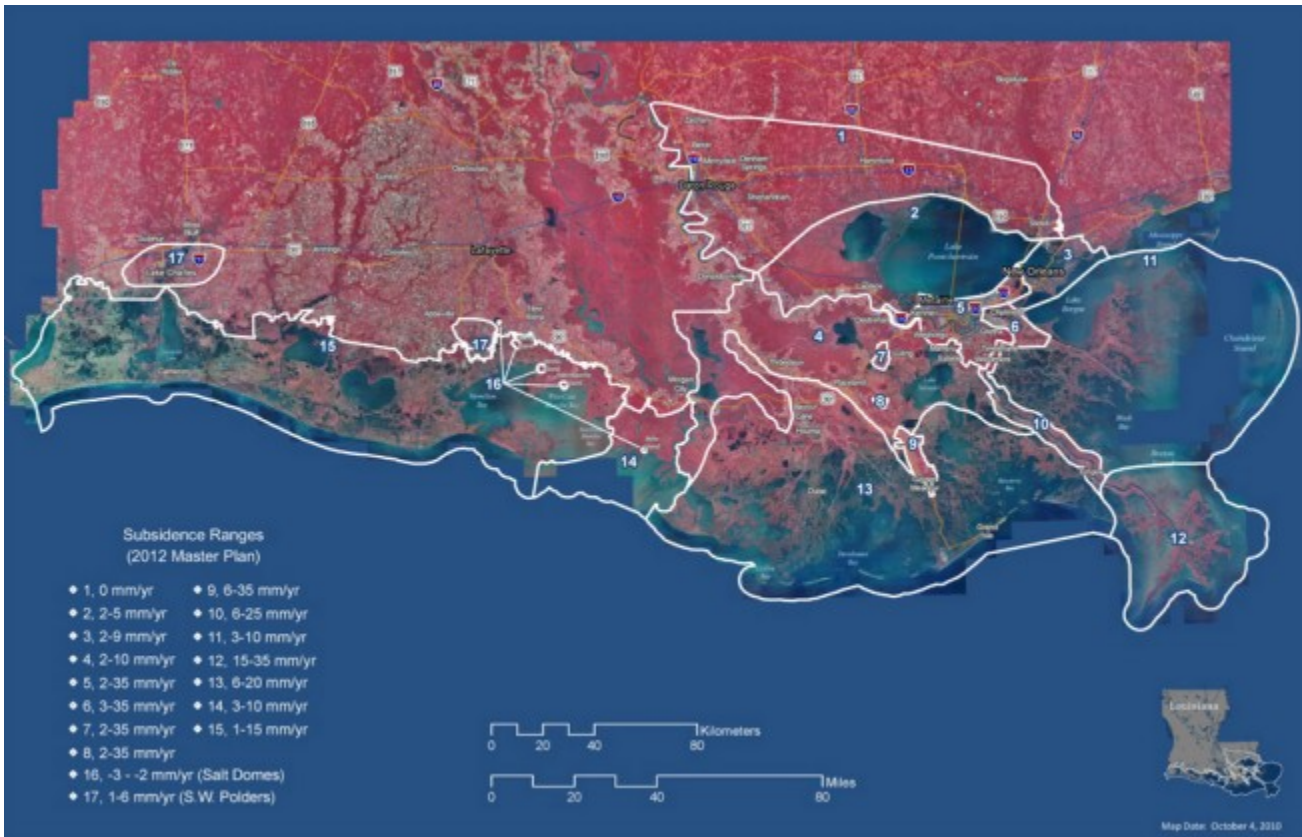
Salt tectonic processes are the second-order control. Salt withdrawal minibasins circumscribed by down-to-the-basin and counter-regional faults are arranged in similar fashion to the underlying rift architecture. These basins are areas of greater overall subsidence, providing accommodation space for the deposition of delta lobes as well as the means to their destruction.

Sedimentation is considered to be a third-order driver of the coastal fabric. This model challenges the traditional river-dominated view of the Mississippi Delta in favor of a view in which the river is a slave to tectonically-controlled depositional topography.

Generalizations of tectonic stability and dismissal of ongoing salt tectonism seem implausible to experienced practitioners of subsurface exploration. The subsurface geology must be taken into account if we are to understand and affect the future landscape of south Louisiana.

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