Act to benefit La. fishery industry

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By Gerard Shields

U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., hailed last week's passage of the Fisheries Act which he said will provide some solutions to serious challenges that Louisiana's fishing industry has faced before and after last year's hurricanes.

Provisions include requiring a report detailing the impact of hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the industry. Vitter, who sits on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee that drafted the bill, secured a $17.5 million authorization in federal funding for a shrimp fisheries hurricane assistance program. He also authored up to $15 million in fishery finance program loans.

"Restoration of Louisiana's fishery infrastructure and habitat is not only essential to our nation's economy, but also to our way of life and to our dinner table," Vitter said in a statement.

Funding benefits programs at LSU
Vitter also announced that the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a $1.8 million appropriation for research programs at the LSU Agricultural Center.

The bill provides $326,000 for aquaculture research that includes crawfish harvesting, genetic improvement to cultured finfish and evaluating alternatives to catfish cultivation methods. Another $495,000 will go toward developing traditional tillage in the southwest Louisiana rice production.

The Pennington Biomedical Research Center also would receive $1 million for human nutrition and obesity research. The bill is expected to be voted on later this year.

Female senators list priorities

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., appeared on Wednesday's edition of CNN's "Larry King Live," along with eight other Democratic women senators promoting their "checklist for change."

The nine priorities range from securing America's pensions to protecting air, land and water. Earlier in the day, the women met at Washington's historic Sewall-Belmont House, where Landrieu called for the need for better disaster response.
She said she favors returning the Federal Emergency Management Agency to cabinet-level status.

Ten months after Katrina and Rita hit and nearly five years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, America's disaster response is still lacking, Landrieu said.

"Our national government has made scant progress in arming, equipping, training and funding state and local governments to better prepare for the next major catastrophe," Landrieu said in a statement.

FEMA grants about $59 million

Landrieu also announced last week that 18 projects in Louisiana will receive FEMA grants totaling about $59 million.

The grants include more than $16 million for temporary facilities related to the closure of Charity Hospital in New Orleans. More than $7 million will go to help clean up debris still polluting St. Tammany Parish and more than $9 million will restore school infrastructure throughout southeast Louisiana.

Landrieu lauds charter schools
Louisiana charter schools will receive $10 million in grants over a three-year period, Landrieu said.

"When we rebuild, we want to build something stronger and better than before," Landrieu, who has been a strong proponent of charter schools, said in a statement.

"These grants will allow Louisiana's school system to have the necessary resources to develop charter schools that will provide our children with the education that they deserve."

Melancon delivers for St. Bernard


The C.F. Rowley Elementary School in Chalmette will receive $2.6 million for repairs.

Another $2.1 million will be dedicated to install, operate and maintain trailers in St. Bernard Parish. The St. Bernard Parish Sheriff's Office will receive $1.8 million to replace vehicles.
Money on the way for Lake Charles


"Lake Charles was forced to use a significant amount of its local resources for debris removal and clean-up following Hurricane Rita," Boustany said in a statement.

"I am pleased that FEMA has begun to repay them for this work, providing critical funding for the city government."