

Governor Phil Bryant
Testimony – “Our Blue Economy: Successes and Opportunities
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Wednesday, March 27, 2019, SD-G50

Blue Economy

Thank you, Senator Wicker. It is an honor and pleasure to appear before the Senate commerce committee to discuss one of my favorite topics, the Blue Economy.

According to the Center for the Blue Economy, the term has three related but distinct meanings: first, the overall contribution of the oceans to economics; second, the need to address the environmental and ecological sustainability of the oceans; and finally, the ocean economy as a growth opportunity for developed and developing countries.¹ On the Mississippi Gulf Coast, we have embraced the Blue Economy with all our energy and ingenuity. Above all other concerns, we care about our land, air and water. They are part of our heritage and community. Mississippians live, work, play and learn on the beautiful waters of the Gulf Coast. The finest seafood in the world comes from these waters. This industry provides thousands of jobs² along with high quality and delicious fish, shrimp and oysters. We work with the inspectors at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Seafood Inspection Services to ensure the safety and high standards of the seafood industry.³

We continue to grow this industry through research, innovation and conservation practices. For example, the Mississippi Oyster Council, formed in 2015,⁴ has provided a detailed plan to reach our goal of a million sacks a year.⁵ The work of the Mississippi Department of

¹<https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/center-blue-economy/about/history>

² <http://coastal.msstate.edu/economic-impact-seafood-mississippi>

³ <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/node/9736>

⁴ <http://www.dmr.state.ms.us/index.php/aquaculture-home/oyster-council>

⁵ <http://www.dmr.state.ms.us/images/dmr/Oyster-Council-report-final.pdf>

Marine Resources enhances the opportunity to protect and grow the seafood industry in collaboration with our federal partners in Congress, NOAA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and The White House.

Shipbuilding has long been a strong part of the Blue Economy on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. For over 80 years, Huntington-Ingalls has supplied the U.S. Navy and our allies with the most advanced warships in the world.⁶ Nearly 12,000 employees now work at the shipyard of the future in Pascagoula, Mississippi.⁷ Hundreds more work at V.T. Halter Marine and U.S. Marine.⁸ We like to say, “if it floats and fights,” it more than likely was built in Mississippi.

The Port of Gulfport, Port of Pascagoula and Port Bienville open the Gulf Coast and Mississippi to the world. The deepwater ports in Jackson and Harrison counties have helped increase exports by 259% in the last ten years.⁹ The Port of Gulfport, which was totally destroyed by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, has been completely restored and re-opened officially in December of 2018.¹⁰ It has been designated as a strategic seaport by the U.S. Department of Defense¹¹ and is currently the third busiest container port in the Gulf of Mexico.¹² The \$570 million restoration since Katrina has been closely monitored by H.U.D. since its conception.¹³ The port has met and exceeds all requirements, and we believe is a model of efficiency for future restoration projects. The port also houses the University of Southern Mississippi Marine Research Center, and plans to construct an Ocean Enterprise Center, in conjunction with the U.S. Navy and NOAA, are currently underway in order to meet the

⁶ <https://ingalls.huntingtoningalls.com/who-we-are/>

⁷ <https://ingalls.huntingtoningalls.com/who-we-are/>

⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/vt-halter-marine/>

⁹ MDA Powerpoint and Tammy Craft email 12/4/18

¹⁰ Jonathan Daniels email 1/4/19

¹¹ <http://shipmspa.com/port-of-gulfport-receives-strategic-seaport-designation/>

¹² <https://www.ms.gov/node/321>

¹³ <http://shipmspa.com/restoration-celebration-ceremony/>

requirements of the CENOTE Act (Commercial Engagement Through Ocean Technology Act of 2018). As you know, the Act encourages NOAA to partner with the secretary of the Navy on unmanned maritime systems technology. At the Port of Gulfport, we have engaged private, academic and public sectors to achieve this goal.

Keesler Air Force Base, located in the City of Biloxi, is headquarters to Second Air Force, the 81st Training Wing of the Air Education and Training Command, the 403rd Wing of the Air Force Reserve, and the 85th Engineering Installation Squadron.¹⁴ Since 1941, Keesler has trained some of the finest pilots in the air force, including the Tuskegee Airmen.¹⁵ Today, the base is home to some 11,000 civilian and military personnel who serve in a variety of duties including the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, known affectionately to us as “Hurricane Hunters.”^{16,17}

I like to describe the Blue Economy as the top of the sky to the bottom of the ocean. No one knows the sky like NASA. The John C. Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, Mississippi, has tested the propulsion systems for every spacecraft since Apollo.¹⁸ Today, Space-X and Aerojet Rocketdyne test their deep space propulsion system at Stennis Space Center.¹⁹ Man may go to Mars one day and return safely to earth, but he will have to pass through Hancock County to get there.

Mr. Chairman, my limited time will not allow me to present all the exciting projects and benefits of our Blue Economy. If time permitted, I would be delighted to tell you about a world-

¹⁴ <https://www.keesler.af.mil/Units/>

¹⁵ <http://www.keesler.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-090203-089.pdf>

¹⁶ Mississippi Defense Initiative Strategic Plan 2019-2023

¹⁷ <https://www.403wg.afrc.af.mil/About/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/192529/53rd-weather-reconnaissance-squadron-hurricane-hunters/>

¹⁸ <https://www.space.com/39498-stennis-space-center.html>

¹⁹ <https://aviationweek.com/awin/rolls-royce-selected-nasas-john-c-stennis-space-center-mississippi> and <http://www.wlox.com/story/23768172/spacex-signs-agreement-with-stennis-space-center/> and <http://www.rocket.com/article/aerojet-rocketdyne-announces-expansion-nasas-stennis-space-center-mississippi>

class aquarium now under construction in Gulfport or the National Oceanographic Application Research Center; how we are restoring the Gulf after the disaster of the Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill; and how funding from the Restore Act has saved hundreds of miles of living shoreline and marine life and their habitats in the Gulf of Mexico.

I would brag on the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport and the great work of the two coast guard stations in Gulfport and Pascagoula, but it seems I have run out of time.

I am extremely grateful to speak before you today and look forward to my fellow presenters' statements and answering any questions you may have. Thank you.