

# Dan Rather Reports

**Episode Number:** 514

**Episode Title:** Mud Flap

**Description:** The Louisiana coastline is quickly disappearing because of man-made levees. But mud from the Mississippi River can save the coast. Without it, scientists predict by the next century, Baton Rouge, 80 miles inland, will be on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

## **RATHER (ON CAMERA)**

GOOD EVENING FROM THE SOUTHERN SHORES OF LOUISIANA. I'M STANDING ALONG A STRETCH OF COASTLINE THAT IS SYMBOLIC OF A DISTURBING TREND... THIS SHORELINE IS DISAPPEARING... FAST... SWALLOWED UP IN WATERS OF THE RAPIDLY ADVANCING GULF OF MEXICO. TONIGHT, AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW A PLAN TO SAVE THIS SHORE BECAME MIRED IN BUREAUCRATIC MUCK AS THICK AS THE MUD IN THESE SWAMPS.

## **RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

CAJUN COUNTRY. THE BAYOUS OF LOUISIANA ARE UNLIKE ANYWHERE ON EARTH... AN ENCHANTING BREW OF WATER, LAND, PLANTS AND ANIMALS. BUT THE CYPRESS TREES, THE SPANISH MOSS... EVERYTHING THAT MAKES THIS PART OF AMERICA DISTINCTIVE IS UNDER THREAT. WITH THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI BOTTLED UP BEHIND LEVEES, THE MARSHES THAT PROTECT THE BAYOUS ARE NO LONGER BEING REPLENISHED WITH THE RIVER MUD THAT HAS SUSTAINED THEM FOR CENTURIES. THE GULF OF MEXICO IS ENCROACHING, WASHING AWAY WETLANDS, ERODING ISLANDS, KILLING THE BAYOUS WITH SALT WATER AND PUTTING AN ENTIRE WAY OF LIFE AND MUCH OF OUR ECONOMY AT RISK. THE CAUSES ARE COMPLEX, BUT THE IMPACT IS VERY REAL. THIS IS LOUISIANA TODAY... AND THIS IS WHAT A PAIR OF SCIENTISTS AT LOUISIANA STATE PREDICTED COULD HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE. NEW ORLEANS... UNDERWATER. THE WELL-KNOWN SHAPE OF THE LOUISIANA COASTLINE... GONE. BATON ROUGE, NOW 80 MILES INLAND... BECOMES WATERFRONT PROPERTY. IT'S ALL ABOUT MUD.

## **TAB BENOIT (playing guitar)**

## **RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THESE MARSHES MEAN, WHAT IS BEING LOST, AND WHY YOU SHOULD CARE, SPEND A LITTLE TIME WITH MUSICIAN TAB BENOIT - HE GREW UP HERE... AND HIS FAMILY HAS DEEP ROOTS IN THE BAYOU.

## **BENOIT (singing)**

I got a feeling for the bayou,

Muddy waters take me home.  
I got a feeling for the bayou...

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

BENOIT REALLY CAN SING THE BLUES -- HE'S BEEN NOMINATED FOR A GRAMMY -- BUT HE'S ALSO BEEN LEADING AN EFFORT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE DIRE SITUATION IN THE BAYOUS HE LOVES. BENOIT FOUNDED VOICE OF THE WETLANDS, A NON-PROFIT CONSERVATION GROUP, IN 2004--BEFORE KATRINA. AND HE'S SINCE SPENT COUNTLESS HOURS TRYING TO GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT WHAT'S AT STAKE.

**RATHER**

Well, how is your music connected to this?

**BENOIT**

Well, the music I play was inspired by this. You know, I'd go out into a swamp-- go out with my boat, and bring my guitar, and just sit down and-- and-- I-- I get inspired by this, you know? When I come out here, I feel an energy here, because this place is alive. And when-- when I see it dyin', it kills me. It--it-- it shuts down that-- that connection that I have with the land.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

BENOIT'S HOMELAND IS ERODING FASTER THAN ALMOST ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD -- ABOUT 25 SQUARE MILES OF LOUISIANA'S COASTLINE WASHES AWAY EACH YEAR -- AN AREA ROUGHLY THE SIZE OF MANHATTAN.

**BENOIT**

I've watched places like this just disappear within-- you know, a matter of years. I mean quickly, you know? And-- I'd say in the last 20 years, the entire swamp behind my parents' house is dead, and it's now open saltwater. I mean, the trees aren't even standin' anymore, and that's-- that's only 20 years.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THAT'S BECAUSE THE DELICATE BALANCE THAT EXISTED HERE FOR AGES IS GONE. WITHOUT NEW SILT FROM THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, MARSHLANDS AT THE EDGE OF THE GULF ARE BEING EATEN AWAY BY THE GULF WATERS... THAT LEAVES BAYOUS LIKE THESE VULNERABLE. TO UNDERSTAND WHY THIS IS HAPPENING, YOU HAVE TO GO BACK NEARLY 100 YEARS... IT WAS CALLED THE GREAT FLOOD. THE YEAR WAS 1927 AND THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER SPILLED OUT OF ITS BANKS, INUNDATING 27,000 SQUARE MILES IN TEN STATES. MORE THAN A HALF MILLION RESIDENTS WERE DISPLACED, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE DIED, AND WHEN THE WATER RECEDED, THERE WAS A NATIONAL DETERMINATION TO MAKE SURE IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN. IT WAS MAN OVER NATURE, AS THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS BUILT

THOUSANDS OF MILES OF FLOOD CONTROL LEVEES UP AND DOWN THE RIVER. THE LEVEES WORKED TO CONTROL FLOODING, BUT THEY HAD AN UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE -- THEY CHANNELED THE MUDDY RIVER RIGHT PAST THE AREAS THAT IT ONCE BUILT UP WITH SEDIMENT, AND NOW THESE ARE THE AREAS THAT ARE BEING WASHED AWAY BY THE GULF. YOU CAN SEE IN THIS SATELLITE PHOTO HOW MUCH SEDIMENT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.

**GARRETT GRAVES**

We look at this, like, the-- the biggest environmental challenge that-- that our nation is facing today.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

LOUISIANA NATIVE GARRET GRAVES KNOWS THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA. THE STATE'S GOVERNOR BOBBY JINDAL HIRED GRAVES TO MANAGE THE RECOVERY OF THE WETLANDS... AND TO TRY TO SAVE THE COASTLINE.

**RATHER**

Give me the overview here. With what are we dealing?

**GRAVES**

Since the 1930s, about the last 80 years, we've lost about 2,300 square miles of coastal lands and wetlands. And-- the majority of that loss is attributable to the-- the-- the levees that were built on the Mississippi River after the Great Flood in 1927. And-- and the-- those levees have been incredibly successful to two things. And-- and one is, they've prevented additional flooding since the '27 flood. And the other thing is, is they've kept that Mississippi River navigation channel right there where it is. It-- it used to change course. And so now 31 states enjoy maritime commerce from that river. And it's a deep draft navigation channel. The adverse consequences are what we're facing today. It-- it has cut off the relationship between the coastal lands and wetlands. And prior to those levees-- being built, our state was actually growing to the tune of one square mile a year. And in recent years, we've averaged a loss of-- somewhere, 60 to 70 square miles of land per year in the last five years.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

BUT GRAVES SAYS THE PROBLEM CAN BE REVERSED. SAVING THE SWAMP COMES DOWN TO TWO WORDS... RECYCLED MUD. THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS USES DREDGER SHIPS LIKE THIS ONE, THE WHEELER, TO KEEP THE MISSISSIPPI OPEN AND NAVIGABLE. THEIR JOB IS TO CLEAR THE TONS OF SILT THAT COMES FROM UPSTREAM AND SETTLES ON THE RIVERBED. TOO MUCH MUD AND THE BIG SHIPS CAN'T PASS. SO DREDGERS LIKE THE WHEELER ARE HARD AT WORK SUCKING THE MUD OFF THE BOTTOM, SIPHONING OFF THE WATER, AND THEN HAULING THE MUD OUT INTO THE GULF. AND THAT'S THE RUB. THE STATE OF LOUISIANA WANTS TO PUT THE MUD WHERE IT USED TO GO

BEFORE THE LEVEES, BACK IN THE MARSHES, WHERE IT WILL REPLENISH WHAT IS QUICKLY DYING. GRAVES IS TRYING TO CONVINCING THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO GET ON BOARD.

**GRAVES**

What we've asked the Corps to do is to start taking that material they dredge and put it into the wetlands, mechanically put it into the wetlands and sort of mimic that natural process. If they did it, today we could be building 12 to 16 square miles of land per year rather than, you know, this incredible loss that we're experiencing.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THIS IS WHAT COASTAL RESTORATION LOOKS LIKE. THE PIPE YOU SEE IS HOOKED UP TO A DREDGER FAR AWAY THAT IS PUMPING MUD INTO WHAT WILL BECOME NEW LAND. IT MAY LOOK LIKE A MUDDY MESS RIGHT NOW, BUT WITH THE RIGHT MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN HELP, THE PLANTS WILL COME AND THE WILDLIFE WILL FOLLOW. THE STATE OF LOUISIANA ALREADY REQUIRES OIL AND NATURAL GAS COMPANIES TO RECYCLE MATERIAL THEY DREDGE... EVEN THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS HAS OVER THE YEARS BUILT SOME COASTLINE WITH DREDGED SEDIMENT. BUT GRAVES SAYS IT'S NOT NEARLY ENOUGH.

**GRAVES**

Countless studies have shown you can-- you can-- you spend proactively on these types of mitigation measures and it-- and it pays off in-- in spades in the future. And-- getting the federal government to shift from that reactive posture to the proactive posture has been very, very challenging.

**RATHER**

Well, that raises a question. Why is the Corps of Engineers resisting this?

**GRAVES**

Um, you know, that's-- that's-- that's a great question. And-- we-- we've been asking that for about two years now.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

GRAVES CITES ONE PROJECT IN SOUTHERN LOUISIANA THAT THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS BEGAN LOOKING AT IN THE EARLY '90s. HE SAYS MORE THAN 50 MILLION DOLLARS HAS BEEN SPENT BUT ALMOST TWENTY YEARS LATER NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE. ANOTHER STUDY IS DUE IN 2012. CONGRESS IS THROWING TENS OF MILLIONS MORE AT THE COASTAL RESTORATION. BUT CORPS OF ENGINEERS BRASS HAS INSISTED ON SINKING AT LEAST HALF THE MUD THEY DREDGE DEEP OUT IN THE GULF BECAUSE IT'S THE CHEAPEST WAY TO DO IT. COLONEL ALVIN LEE, A COMBAT VETERAN, NOW MANAGES THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS OPERATIONS IN SOUTHERN LOUISIANA. HE SAYS CONGRESS FORCES THEM TO BE COST-CONSCIOUS.

**COLONEL LEE**

We do have a federal standard. That-- that's what Congress allows us to do for-- most cost effective and-- environmentally acceptable method. Anything above that-- the state can bring contributed funds to the table and we can pump it even farther.

**RATHER**

What about the argument that says, "Listen, the Army Corps of Engineers is great-- has done some great work. But it primarily serves the interests of shipping and the petroleum business. What it should be about-- about is about the people. The people who live on the coast."

**COLONEL LEE**

Well, I think-- if you looked at our funding and, you know, you-- we-- we do things that have a federal interest. It's not a local interest or a regional interest. Anytime we look at a project it has to serve the better-- the better part of our nation. We have four ports on that river that comprise the third largest port in the world. Those ports not only serve the local economy, but they serve the regional economy and the national economy. So there is-- some priority to that.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THE ARMY CORPS SAYS ITS PRIORITY IS DREDGING AND KEEPING AMERICA'S COMMERCE MOVING, READ THAT SHIPPING AND PETROLEUM INTERESTS. AND THESE ARE IMPORTANT. BILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF TRADE MOVE UP AND DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI, AND 80 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS TRAVEL THROUGH COASTAL LOUISIANA. THE CORPS EMPHASIZES IT DOES RECYCLE SOME MUD... WHEN IT'S CONVENIENT AND WHEN THEY THINK IT MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE.

**RATHER**

Well, the Army Corps has said publicly that Congress mandated it to dispose of the dredge material in the cheapest way possible. But-- wouldn't it be a good long-term investment to reuse this sediment?

**COLONEL LEE**

Yeah, I think if you look at our program since the mid '70s, we have one of the-- largest beneficial use programs in-- in the Corps of Engineers throughout the nation. And I-- I think if you look at the results of what we've done-- throughout the coast, we have maximized to the maximum extent practical within the federal standard-- the beneficial use of dredge material.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

COLONEL LEE SHOWED ME SOME OF WHAT THE CORPS HAD BEEN DOING FOR RESTORATION -- AND HE SAYS THEY'VE CREATED ABOUT 25 SQUARE MILES OF LOUISIANA COASTLINE IN THE PAST 20 YEARS...  
COLONEL LEE

If you look at this map... this is an after shot of what we did in F.Y. 2008.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

BUT COLONEL LEE ADDED RESTORATION PROJECTS ARE COMPLICATED AND HE SAYS THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE STUDY ABOUT HOW TO DO THEM IN THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY POSSIBLE.

**RATHER**

Some of the people I spoke with said, "Listen, we don't need another study. We don't need another group. What we need is action on the ground." To those people you would say what?

**COLONEL LEE**

We're finishing those studies this year. So that means that when we complete those studies-- they'll go forward to Congress for funding. And-- and that's a very positive step. So we're seeing a lot of momentum building in getting that program moving.

**GRAVES**

On average-- here in south Louisiana with-- with the Corps of Engineers and the other federal agencies it takes about 40 years from conception of a project to completion of a project. And obviously with the rate of loss we're having and the implications-- not just the local implications but the national implications of continuing to-- to allow this loss and this vulnerability to exist, it's simply unsustainable. From a financial perspective, it's unsustainable. From an economic perspective, it's unsustainable. And from an environmental perspective, it's unsustainable. This is some of the most productive ecosystem in our country. And it's just disappearing on a daily basis.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

GRAVES INSISTS THAT ALL THIS STUDY AND DELAY HAS LEFT THE STATE MUCH MORE VULNERABLE TO MOTHER NATURE. HURRICANES NOW HAVE AN UNOBSTRUCTED SHOT INLAND. THE COASTAL WETLANDS ONCE SERVED AS THE STATE'S GREATEST PROTECTION AGAINST STORMS. BUT WITH NOTHING TO SLOW DOWN THE HIGH WINDS AND FLOOD WATERS... CITIES LIKE NEW ORLEANS HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE VULNERABLE. EVIDENCE HURRICANE KATRINA, WHICH SCIENTISTS BELIEVE STEAMROLLED OVER OPEN WATERS THAT HAD ONCE BEEN SWAMP... NOT ONLY COSTING NEW ORLEANS, BUT EVERY TAXPAYER IN THE UNITED STATES. THAT'S WHY GRAVES THINKS FIXING THE WETLANDS IS A SOUND INVESTMENT.

**GRAVES**

You'd probably need to spend somewhere in the maybe \$100 million range-- to-- to get that sediment and to-- to beneficially use it. And that's a lotta money. But after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita-- Congress so far has appropriated about \$150 billion, responding to these hurricanes.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

BUT SOME THINK THE PRICE TAG, AND THE PROBLEM, IS MUCH BIGGER THAN ANY POLITICIAN IS TELLING THE PUBLIC.

**DENISE REED**

I think we've been fooling ourselves that \$50 million here or \$100 million there, or even \$500 million there is gonna make a big difference. It's gonna take much more than that.

**RATHER**

Can we afford it?

**REED**

I don't think we have any choice.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS SCIENTIST DENISE REED IS A TOP EXPERT IN COASTAL EROSION AND MARSHES. THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA IS HER LABORATORY AND SHE'S WORRIED BY WHAT SHE SEES.

**REED**

The Mississippi River built this coast. It's the lifeblood of the coast. And we just channel it off into the Gulf of Mexico.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THE MISSISSIPPI DOMINATES THE AMERICAN MIDWEST AND HAS INSPIRED EXPLORERS, WRITERS AND MUSICIANS FOR CENTURIES. IT'S MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED MILES LONG. IT'S TRIBUTARIES STRETCH FROM THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS TO THE ROCKIES. AND PARTS OF THIRTY-ONE STATES SEND THEIR RAIN WATER AND MELTING SNOWS INTO THE MIGHTY RIVER, SWEEPING UP RICH SEDIMENT ON THE JOURNEY TO THE GULF.

**REED**

It's a huge resource. It's the resources that can fix this. And we just waste it, day after day, year after year. Every time there's a flood, all that sediment, all that, little bits of Iowa and little bits of Illinois (LAUGH) and little bits of Wyoming, they're all going into the Gulf of Mexico, and that should be building coastal Louisiana. That's what coastal Louisiana is made of.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

REED SAYS IT'S FROM THE AIR THAT YOU CAN BEST SEE THE EROSION DAMAGE TO COASTAL MARSHES. HEALTHY WETLANDS LOOK LIKE THIS... KNEE-HIGH GRASSES SLICED BY NARROW, WINDING CHANNELS AND SMALL POOLS... FLOCKS OF MIGRATORY BIRDS. BUT THESE DAYS, THEY ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. MOST OF THE REMAINING

MARSHES ARE GETTING THINNER AND SPARSER, WASHED AWAY BY WIDENING LAKES AND CANALS.

**REED**

What would be land today, that we could go walk on, next year would be open water, where essentially, we'd be swimming. So, that's what coastal land loss is. It's turning marsh into water. We're not losing wetlands like they are in other parts of the country, because we're building subdivisions or Wal-Marts or golf courses on them. It's actually changing to open water.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

IN THIS SEQUENCE OF SATELLITE PHOTOS, YOU CAN SEE THE CHANGE THAT HAS HAPPENED IN JUST 20 YEARS. ENTIRE ISLANDS HAVE DISAPPEARED... EXPANSES OF LUSH MARSHES ARE GONE.

**RATHER**

Well, how much time do we have before the damage becomes irreversible? Or do we have any time?

**REED**

Well, every day we wait, the more difficult it becomes. At the moment, we still have a skeleton of the coast left. And we can put the flesh back on that skeleton. If we wait until that skeleton wastes away, then we'll be building that, too. And essentially, we will be building a new Louisiana in open water. We have to grab onto that bit of Louisiana that we have left, and build around it, and get that river and get that marsh back in there, building up again.

**RATHER**

I want to ask you, you're a candid talker. You (LAUGH) know what you're talking about. And when I talk to the people here, the people who live here, who are so deeply concerned, they say, "Listen, this has been goin' on for 50 years. They do the research, they run through the process. But they never seem to get together and get anything done." Is that or is that not a fair assessment of where we are?

**REED**

Part of this is-- a reflection of the many different agencies and entities that are involved in this. We, the bigger we, we have never, despite all the plans that we have, we have never really agreed on what we want to achieve at the end. If we don't know where we want to go, we can't take those first steps on getting there.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

BUT THE EROSION WON'T WAIT. RIGHT HERE IN THE CENTER OF THIS DRAMATIC LOSS OF LAND IS ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES. THIS TINY FINGER USED TO BE PROTECTED FROM GULF STORMS BY ACRES OF THICK, GRASSY MARSHES. BUT IN THE PAST 20 YEARS, ALMOST ALL OF THAT NATURAL BARRIER HAS BEEN CHIPPED AWAY. AND THE RESIDENTS, A



POOR NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY, HAVE PAID THE PRICE. A SERIES OF POWERFUL HURRICANES IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS HAS WRECKED MANY OF THE HOMES ON THE ISLAND -- HUNDREDS OF RESIDENTS HAVE SINCE FLED TO NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES. THIS IS WHAT SCIENTISTS FEAR COULD HAPPEN SOON TO MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS JUST A FEW MILES INLAND.

**THERESA BRUNET-HANDON**

This use to be my home that I raised my family in, that my husband died in. And after each storm, it- it just got worse and worse. And then when Ike came, it's like- it took everything. But I'm not ready to part with it yet.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THERESA BRUNET HANDON IS A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL NATIVE BILOXI-CHITIMACHA-CHOCTAW TRIBE... ITS ROOTS HERE DATE BACK 170 YEARS, WHEN A FRENCHMAN AND HIS INDIAN WIFE SETTLED HERE. NOW, BRUNET-HANDON IS ONE OF FEWER THAN 70 HOLDOUTS. AND THE TRIBE'S CHIEF, ALBERT NAQUIN, IS TRYING TO GET THE REST TO LEAVE FOR WHAT HE SAYS IS THEIR OWN SAFETY.

**ALBERT NAQUIN**

I seen the mud, the disaster, the destruction against the community, I said, "No, these people got to go, I mean there's no way that they can keep on living like this."

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THIS TWO LANE BLACKTOP IS THE ONLY ROAD TO THE ISLAND. BUT WITH MORE AND MORE STORMS CHIPPING AWAY THE ASPHALT, THE GOVERNMENT HAS STOPPED MAINTAINING IT.

**NAQUIN**

To me I think they're sending us a message that it's time to pack our bags and go.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THE CHIEF MOVED AWAY ALREADY. BUT HE'S HAVING A HARD TIME CONVINCING OTHERS, LIKE THERESA BRUNET-HANDON, HER DAUGHTER VIOLET PARFAIT, AND HER BROTHER CHRISTOPHER BRUNET, TO FOLLOW SUIT.

**CHRISTOPHER BRUNET**

You know from the get-go I've been on that said, you know, yes I'm for the relocation. But then again, as long as we can keep, you know, what we have.

**BRUNET-HANDON**

As long as all of us can be still together. You know because we all have history together -- we're related.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

NAQUIN KNOWS THE ISLAND WILL DISAPPEAR AND HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE THE TRIBE'S CULTURE DOESN'T DISAPPEAR WITH IT.

**NAQUIN**

I hate to use the word "relocate" and I want to start using the word "restore." Because that's what we should all do is restore the community from here and put it somewhere else....

**PARFAIT**

A lot of people wants to move, but they don't want to give up their land.

**BRUNET**

And some don't want to move at all.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

FOR NOW, BRUNET-HANDON PLANS TO STAND HER GROUND.

**BRUNET-HANDON**

I'm gonna stay here as long as I can. I'mma stay here as long as I can.

**RATHER**

Why is that important to you?

**BRUNET-HANDON**

The memories. This is my place. This is my home. This is where my heart wants to be, my soul wants to be. And I'm free here. Out here I have family. I can look at the waters. And to me, just amazing. It's awesome just to look and see this island. I just love it here. If I had a boat I'd probably on the water this afternoon going fishing. You know, that's just my joy. This place brings joys to my heart.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THE WAY OF LIFE FOR THOSE STILL LIVING ON ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES IS DISAPPEARING... ALONG WITH THE COASTLINE. THERE'S LITTLE TO DO BUT MOVE AWAY OR BRACE FOR YET ANOTHER STORM SEASON.

**BENOIT (fishing)**

Alright, I'll use that one.

**RATHER**

That means you're gonna catch all the fish.

BENOIT

Actually, the lure I got on this one...

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

TAB BENOIT TOLD ME HE STOPPED WRITING SONGS A FEW YEARS AGO -

- HE HASN'T HAD TIME TO JUST FLOAT ON THE SWAMPS AND SOAK IN WHAT HAS INSPIRED SO MUCH OF HIS MUSIC... AND WHAT IS NOW SO FAST DISAPPEARING. . HE'S BEEN TOO BUSY TRYING TO SAVE WHAT'S LEFT.

**BENOIT**

Look at the little alligator right there. Little bitty. See his little tail sticking up and his head right here?

**RATHER**

Oh I see him.

**BENOIT**

He's just sitting there, like we don't exist.

**BENOIT (singing)**

When I'm feeling the pain,  
The bayou's calling my name,  
And that's an offer that I can't refuse.  
I said it's hard to miss you, Louisiana,  
When a Cajun man gets the blues.