

**Statement by the Honorable John Fleming**  
**Chairman, House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee**  
**Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3342**  
**November 4, 2015**

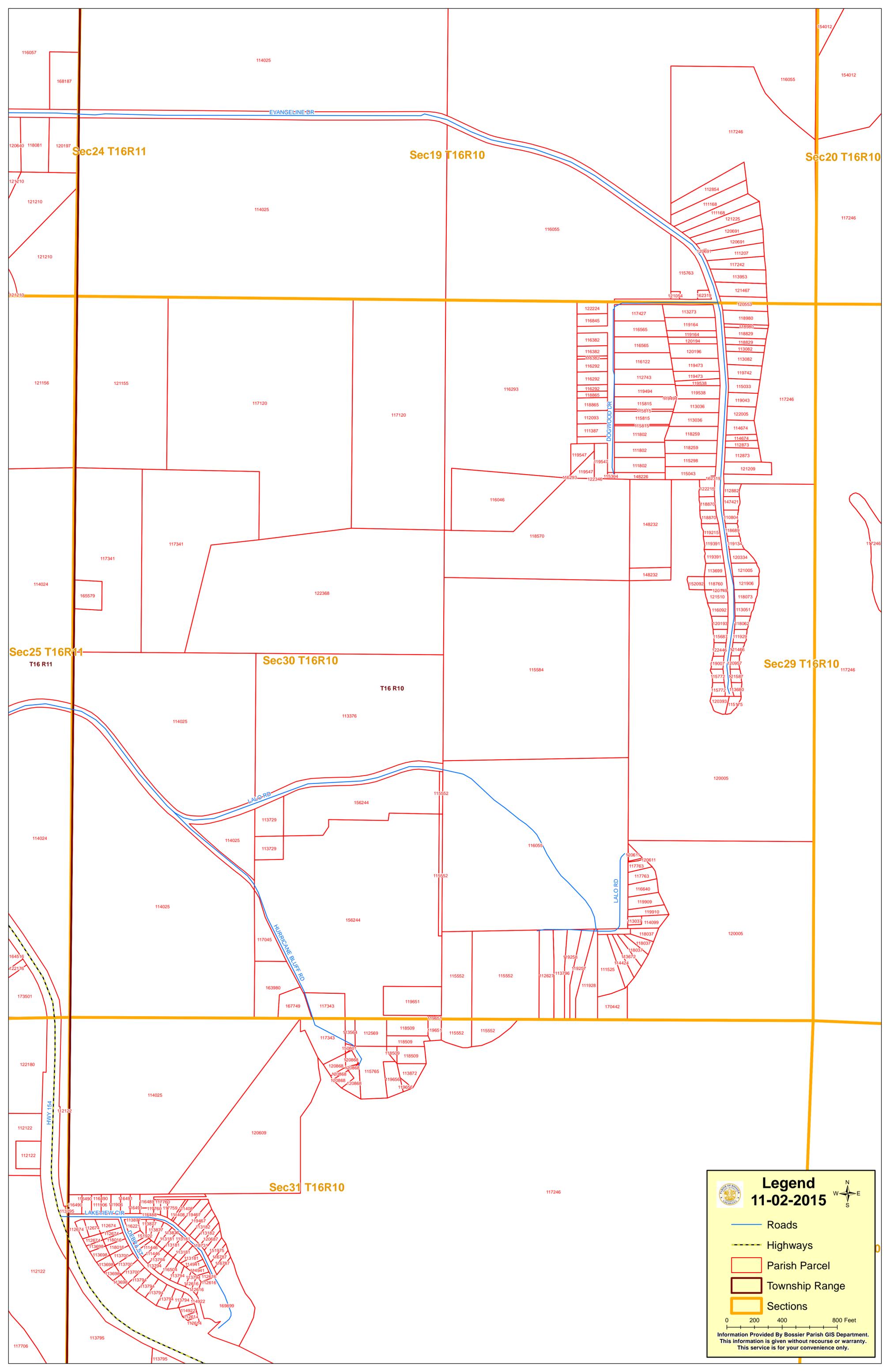
Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify on my bill, H.R. 3342. I believe this simple bill speaks for itself, and I hope Congress will move quickly to adopt it and protect the affected landowners and the State of Louisiana, who have all acted in good faith.

The need for this bill dates back to Louisiana's entrance into the United States. When the lands in Northern Louisiana were being surveyed, the Surveyor General of the United States issued maps of Lake Bistineau, which was a raft lake subject to a high degree of variability in its levels and boundaries. This survey was definitive for over a century, and was the basis for the State of Louisiana transferring its title in the subject lands to the Bossier Levee District, and then to private landowners. Under this original survey, continuity of title was maintained for over 150 years.

In 1967, the Bureau of Land Management conducted a re-survey. That is certainly within the BLM's authority; however, this particular re-survey proposed to represent what they thought Lake Bistineau looked like 127 years earlier at the time of the Original Survey. They drew a different boundary line for the lake than the Original Survey--a boundary that they propose would affect title to the land. Although the BLM's actions had the potential to affect numerous private land-owners at the time of the re-survey, no actual notice was provided to the affected citizens. In fact, other than posting a notice in the Federal Register, the BLM didn't do much at all.

However, in September of 2013, only upon the inquiry of private landowners in the affected area, the BLM provided a response that, based on the 1967 resurvey, "title would still appear to be vested in the United States." Both my staff and the attorney representing several landowners have had conversations with National BLM representatives as well as the regional BLM representatives in Jackson, MS, in which the BLM indicated that they do not actually seek to claim the private owner's property, but the BLM is powerless to properly disclaim ownership in the land absent legislation or court action. Therefore, I have introduced H.R. 3342 in order to remedy the situation and clarify that the survey referenced in 34 Federal Register 2677 shall have no legal bearing on the title of the affected land.

As you can see from the map displayed, there are over 100 homeowners that could be negatively impacted if these title questions are not definitively settled. In addition, there are active mineral rights, which are being held up over these questions of title. This bill would remedy both areas in a common-sense manner. I urge its markup and passage. Thank you.



**Legend**  
11-02-2015

-  Roads
-  Highways
-  Parish Parcel
-  Township Range
-  Sections

0 200 400 800 Feet

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