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Transportation, recreation, commercial fishing: no matter how you look at it, water, and access to it, is an integral part of our lives along the Gulf Coast. The livelihood of some, such as oystermen, boat makers, and charter fishermen, rely on ready access to the water. However, the market for waterfront residential property is as popular as ever, putting increasing pressure on the land available for open waterfront access.

Other states have experience with this issue. Maine, Florida, and Connecticut have all taken measures to ensure access to their waterfronts remains for those who depend on it. In some cases, such as with the City of Orange Beach, land or marinas have been purchased by governments for this purpose. In addition, Senate Bill 1723 has been introduced in Congress. This bill, if approved, would provide states with funds to purchase property or interest in property to provide access for commercial fishing and the aquaculture industry.

A growing community is one of balances and compromises. It is up to the members of communities along the Gulf Coast to set its own priorities regarding working waterfronts. Efforts should be made to ensure that all parties and economic interests, recreational, commercial, and residential, have the access they need to our waterways.