

Gulf Coast Reporters' League

Louisiana Mississippi Alabama Florida



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A bi-monthly update of aerospace activities in the Gulf Coast I-10 region

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The June 2017 Paris Air Show drew 180,000 general public and 142,000 trade visitors. SIAE photo

Economic development

Paris: Leveraging the assets

Economic development officials from the region left the Paris air show optimistic that all the work elevating the Gulf Coast's aerospace profile on the international stage is paying off...

Nathan Sparks couldn't help but feel a huge rush of pride when he saw the cutting-edge F-35 roar skyward during its first public aerial demonstration at the Paris Air Show in June.

To Sparks, the fifth-generation stealth fighter that wowed the international crowd at the historic Paris airport represented not only the United States and its military prowess, but home.

Sparks leads economic development efforts in Northwest Florida's Okaloosa County, home of Eglin Air Force Base, which trains F-35 pilots and maintainers and has two F-35 reprogramming labs. The first F-35 arrived at Eglin in 2011, and Sparks can't help but feel an affinity for the fighter that's now part of the fabric of Okaloosa County.



The 2017 Paris Air Show, held June 17-23, drew 2,381 exhibitors from 48 countries. There were 140 aircraft exhibited and 45 performed flying displays. There were 290 official delegations from 98 countries and 3,450 accredited journalists from 67 coun-

tries. The activities drew 180,000 general public visitors and 142,000 trade visitors.

The air show is an international stage where companies hawk their products and services and where economic development professionals go to pitch their city, county, metro area, region or state as a great place to do business.

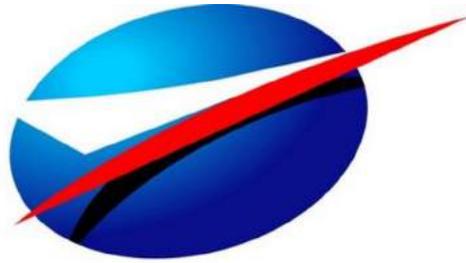
The whole exercise is understandable. Economic development officials target aerospace and aviation because it's a multibillion-dollar sector with international players. Workers in the field are highly paid, and they're involved in a host of occupations, from engineers and pilots to mechanics and baggage handlers. And Paris, as well as the Farnborough Air Show in London on alternate years, provide an opportunity to meet with a wide range of company officials at a central location.

Sparks was one of the officials from the Gulf Coast I-10 region who went to the show with the aim of growing their aerospace footprint. In addition to Northwest Florida, there were representatives from South Alabama, South Mississippi, Southeast Louisiana and their respective states.

Sparks, executive director of the Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County, doesn't just have the F-35 at Eglin to brag about. The base also has a huge RDT&E operation that focuses on air-delivered weaponry. It hosts operations from some of the biggest names in aerospace and defense, including Lockheed Martin and Boeing. The county is also the home of Hurlburt Field, home of the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command.

Sparks, who went to his first aerospace trade show in 2000, said that early on it was still a matter of getting the word out about Okaloosa County. Now the county and Gulf Coast region are much better known, and the investment appears to be paying off.

"This was, I believe, our most successful event. The way I define success



52nd INTERNATIONAL PARIS AIR SHOW | 52^e SALON INTERNATIONAL DE L'AÉRONAUTIQUE ET DE L'ESPACE

is, if we have the opportunity to interface in a meaningful way with decision maker and if we get a favorable response ... so absolutely yes, it was successful," he said.

The meetings were with high level executives, and even board chairmen. They were receptive to learning more about Northwest Florida, he said.

"It's clear that all of the effort that our region has gone through over the last several years appears to be resonating," he said, noting there's already a good deal of awareness about the region. "While they didn't all have projects, many of them did give us some insight which could have a bearing on our region," he said. "Some were pretty direct ... Some have already resulted in proposals."

Bill Cork also has significant aerospace activities in his South Mississippi county, where he's the head of economic development. Hancock County hosts NASA's Stennis Space Center, the largest rocket engine test facility in the country. The center is drawing the interest of a new breed of commercial space companies attracted to the idea of using assets that are already in place. So he was busy.

"I had 20 prearranged meetings spread out over three days," said Cork, executive director of the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission. A third of his meetings were with aerospace businesses already working in South Mississippi or elsewhere in the state; the rest were with prospects.

Of those, half were commercial space companies, in particular the

companies that are involved in heavy lift activities. The others were an assortment involved in parts and aerospace supplies.

In addition to hosting SSC, the county also has an airport just outside the gates of SSC. Stennis International Airport is used by many SSC operations, including Rolls-Royce, which uses it to transport jet engines it tests at its outdoor facility at SSC.

The airport is also the location of the Joint Airborne Lidar Bathymetry Center, which does airborne littoral mapping, Optech, which builds advanced lidar, and Tyonek, the former Selex Galileo, which does avionics work.

While Cork didn't leave with any signed deals, he left optimistic about the potential for Hancock County, which is just across the state line from NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans.

"Our existing companies have significant growth plans," Cork said. "With respect to commercial space, it's the Wild, Wild West right now. There's a lot of activity, a lot of investment and movement."

And suppliers? "What we're seeing, I think most significant, is the flight to a low-cost environment. Many are looking at relocating from high-cost areas to the Southeast. We seem to be meeting favorably with their needs."

He understands events like Paris are part of an investment in the future. The Mississippi Gulf Coast Alliance for Economic Development, which represents three coastal counties -- Hancock, Harrison and Jackson -- has had a presence at the air shows for more than a decade.

"We not only pitch Hancock County, but all of South Mississippi. It's a continuous effort."

The county has had some recent wins. Aerojet Rocketdyne, a long-time tenant at SSC, in July 2016 said assembly and testing of its AR1 rocket would be done at its Center of Excellence for Large Liquid Rocket Engine Assembly

and Test facility at SSC. More recently, Relativity Space began testing engines at Stennis Space Center. And Cork hinted at what may come down the road.

“There’s more like it in the market. We can’t talk about a lot of the activity, but there are limited test facilities,” he said, and SSC has plenty. “Our optimism is well above average,” he said.

Don Pierson, Secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, headed up the team from his state at the Paris Air Show. He said it’s “always one of our key international events for LED and our economic development partners in Louisiana.”

The reason the state is so active in aerospace circles - it also has a presence at the Farnborough air show and MRO conferences - is because it’s one of nine key industries where the state has a strong presence or strong growth opportunities.

“In the case of aerospace, it’s both. We’re strong now, and we see great potential for the future of aerospace in Louisiana,” he said.

In Paris, Louisiana pursued major and minor component suppliers for aircraft, rotorcraft and space flight. Two representatives of Michoud Assembly Facility were part of the Louisiana group, and there were attendees from Chennault International Airport as well as the Shreveport Airport Authority.

“Michoud Assembly Facility continues to impress, with Boeing ramping up production of SLS components. Michoud has some green space available that provides excellent growth potential,” he said.

“We have an intriguing pipeline of prospects that we’ve been accruing over time, at many air shows and prospect-specific visits to headquarters and operational sites,” he said.

“We came back from Paris enthused, and ready to hit the airstrips and hangars and the corporate boardrooms that power them,” he said.



F-35 from Hill Air Force Base, Utah, performs at Paris show.

U.S. Air Force photo

Bill Sisson, president and CEO of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, is in a city that has had a string of successes when it comes to attracting aerospace companies. The effort to attract aerospace to Mobile, particularly the former Brookley Air Force Base that closed in the ‘60s, was well underway when Airbus said in 2012 that it would open an A320 final assembly line at the former base, now called Mobile Aeroplex. Suppliers followed.

The assembly line was the third Airbus operation in Mobile. Earlier the city landed Airbus Military at Mobile Regional Airport, where it operates an MRO. Mobile later landed an Airbus Engineering center, which is located at the Mobile Aeroplex.

And Mobile is far from done.

Sisson was among 15 people who went to the air show to represent Mobile and Baldwin counties. He said that in the past they had to pull out a map to show where Mobile is located, but that’s not the case today.

“That’s always the most pleasant thing to experience,” said Sisson, who was the executive director of the Mobile Airport Authority during the bid to land Airbus. “We are a known entity now because of Airbus.”

He said there is still room at the Mobile Aeroplex, as well as other locations in and around Mobile. Nearby Baldwin County, where UTC Aerospace does engine pod work for the Mobile-built A320s, also has room to grow.

On the Tuesday evening of the trade show Mobile and Baldwin counties hosted a Mobile Bay reception. Sisson said that more than 100 people, including high level executives, attended the event at Musee Jacquemart-Andre. He found the great turnout to be very encouraging.

Roger Wehner, who leads Global Resource Group in Birmingham, Ala., a management consulting firm, was in Paris again this year. Wehner is the former executive director of the Mobile Airport Authority who followed Sisson in that position. He was at the helm of MAA when Airbus opened its final assembly line and when suppliers began flocking in. Even before that he was on loan to MAA from Alabama Power during the effort to build Airbus tankers in Mobile. He said that’s when he learned about recruiting suppliers.

Wehner was engaged by the team from Northwest Florida to lead its effort at the Paris Air Show this year.

Wehner said that if you are a known entity and have built a reputation of credibility by delivering on what you say, “then when companies have opportunities, you’re going to hear about it” and will be part of the conversation. “It allows you to be successful down the road.”

Wehner said the Northwest Florida team’s conversations started with a discussions of what they call the “aerospace crescent,” an area of aircraft manufacturers from Airbus in Mobile to Boeing in South Carolina. It runs east along Interstate 10 from Mobile to Jacksonville, Fla., then up to North Charleston.

The crescent includes Brazil’s Embraer in Jacksonville, which manufactures the A-29 Super Tucano attack plane, and General Dynamics’ Gulfstream Aerospace in Savannah, Ga., manufacturer of business jets.

“From my perspective, over 15 years of going to these type events, I don’t think I’ve ever been part of a more successful business trip. There’s a lot of exciting activity, I think a lot of great opportunities.”

Rick Byars, community and economic development manager with Pensacola-based Gulf Power, was the one who reached out to Wehner to lead the team from Northwest Florida.

“Under Roger’s leadership we put together a packet of information, talking points, starting with where we are in relation to final assembly lines,” he said. They also talked about workforce training and the quality of life that Northwest Florida offers.

“It was the best trip we ever had,” said Byars. They had 36 confirmed appointments, with most of them large companies. He described them as Tier 1 and 2 companies. The meetings included talks with organizations that had “10 to 12 active projects.”

“We met with companies that would have interest because of our proximity to Airbus, Boeing and Gulfstream,” said Byars, who made it a point to



VTMAE MRO hangar being built at Pensacola International Airport. *Courtesy Aero Photo*

highlight the availability of sites certified as shovel-ready in Gulf Power’s Florida First program.

They also emphasized the strong military presence in Northwest Florida, pointing out that 6,000 trained personnel exit the military after 20-year careers and are still young and looking for a second career with skills that can adapt quickly.

They also emphasize that Florida is a pro-business state, No. 4 in the Tax Foundation report. And aerospace is big in the state. Northwest Florida alone has a large aerospace cluster with other 500 companies operating in aerospace, aviation and related fields, he said. On top of that, there are also unique opportunities to diversify the region’s economy thanks to the millions that will pour in from Triumph Gulf Coast dollars - money resulting from the 2010 oil spill.

Becca Hardin, president of the Bay Economic Development Alliance in Panama City, Fla., said she’s gone to events like the Paris Air Show for 14 years, and “this year in my opinion was the most productive and successful I’ve ever done.”

She met with more than 20 compa-

nies and received eight real leads that the county is following up on.

“Aviation is a big target for us,” she said. Bay County hosts Tyndall Air Force Base, home of the Air Combat Command’s 325th Fighter Wing, including the 95th Fighter Squadron and its fifth-generation F-22 Raptors.

It’s also the location of Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, which opened in May 2010. In early 2017, GKN Aerospace said it would establish a production center at VentureCrossings near the airport.

That decision has been a boost for the county’s effort to get more aviation players. There are 3,000 acres available around the airport, and other shovel-ready sites, according to Hardin. She said MROs, painting facilities and anything that would complement GKN are possible for the county.

Hardin said that when she mentioned GKN Aerospace during her Paris trip, “ears perked up.” She said it’s a marquee project, the type economic development professionals strive to get, and she feels “lucky and blessed.”

- *David Tortorano*

Aviation key for four states

Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi were among the U.S. states represented with exhibition booths at the 52nd Paris Air Show. Others included Connecticut, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington State.

The goal for each is the same. Grow the aerospace sector.

In addition to having their own presence, the four Gulf Coast states are also represented by the non-profit Aerospace Alliance. Jointly funded by Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi, the organization for the third time hosted a pre-show reception on a yacht on the River Seine. It's always held on the Sunday before the trade show starts on Monday, and it's not actually a part of the air show.



But it's still hugely popular.

The Aerospace Alliance's Melissa Medley said this year's event had 435 people registered to attend. About a third were officials representing Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi, but the remainder were representatives from aerospace companies.

The reception does not have a program and is designed to let participants mingle. It helps the four states connect with each other and to connect with businesses.

She said the idea is to let them all meet with no pressure before the show.

"It's a totally different atmosphere. They get to spend two hours talking to a wide variety of people," she said. There's a lot of mingling with people circulating widely. She said she knows



An A321 enters the MAAS paint shop in Mobile.

MAAS Aviation photo

of one company that says it accomplishes a lot at the reception.

"This is their event, and it creates a lot of good will," she said. "What's great is, people know what to expect. They are prepared to have a good time and to work it."

She said the gathering is important because it's the type of event that few states undertake on their own. But the four member states have seen "the wisdom" of sponsoring the event and using it to connect with companies.

The four states compete for projects, but also work together at times. The Aerospace Alliance, in fact, was created during the time Mobile was hoping it would build Air Force tankers. The group was formed in part to support that effort, but had a life well beyond that initial focus.

All four states have significant aerospace and defense activities, and combined they rank as the fourth largest aerospace region in the country, according to the Aerospace Alliance.

Alabama has more than 300 companies engaged in the aerospace and defense sector, according to the Alabama Aerospace Industry Association. It's best known for north Alabama's



Huntsville, home of the Army's Redstone Arsenal and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. It continues to attract operations. Aerojet Rocketdyne in April said it's setting up an AR1 manufacturing plant there, consolidating work from California and Virginia.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics from May 2016, Alabama had the nation's highest concentration of aerospace engineers, and the Huntsville MSA had the second highest concentration of jobs for aerospace engineers. Southeast Alabama had the second highest concentration of aerospace engineering jobs of non-metro areas.

Florida is the No. 2 state in the nation for aerospace, aviation and space establishments, with more than 2,000 companies employing 82,000-plus workers. The state is also No. 2 in the 2016 PwC Aerospace Manufacturing Attractiveness Rankings.



In Florida, the best-known aerospace activity is the Space Coast, home to Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral and Patrick Air Force Base. Since the earliest days of the space race this is the location where Americans ventured into space. It's also where private space

companies have set up operations to leverage idled NASA facilities.

Louisiana's aerospace footprint may be best known for NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in East New Orleans, but to the west there's the 82,300 square-foot Bell Helicopter assembly facility at Lafayette Regional Airport, which started making helicopters in 2016.



AAR Corp. and Northrop Grumman operate major maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities at Chennault International Airport in Lake Charles, and Aviation Exteriors paints aircraft in Ne Iberia. Northwest Louisiana is home of Barksdale Air Force Base and the 2nd Bomb Wing and its B-52H Stratofortress bombers.

According to LED, Louisiana has 6,200 aviation and aerospace jobs. The Department of Transportation and Development counts nearly 60,000 and \$1.8 billion in annual payroll directly supported by the 68 public-use airports in the state. It also has 82 LED certified sites in 32 parishes.

Secretary of Louisiana Economic Development Don Pierson apparently recognizes the value of joint efforts.

"We will do a better job of engaging local and regional partners to attend



TH-57 training helicopters lined up at Naval Air Station Whiting Field. *U.S. Navy photo*

the show and in supplying funds for a better marketing presence in the future," he said.

Mississippi has become a key player in the growing field of unmanned aerial vehicles. Aurora Flight Sciences, Northrop Grumman Unmanned Systems and Stark Aerospace all build unmanned aerial systems in Mississippi. It's also home to the Raspet Flight Research Laboratory at Mississippi State University in Starkville, which in May 2015 was chosen by the Federal



Aviation Administration to head a team of 16 universities as a center of excellence for UAS research. In 2016, the Department of Homeland Security picked MSU as a base of operation for drone research, much of the work will be in South Mississippi.

In addition, Pioneer Aerospace has made parachute systems in the state since the 1930s, and Eaton Aerospace makes commercial aircraft components. GE Aviation makes jet engine components at two sites in the state.

- David Tortorano

The I-10 showcase

With all the aerospace and aviation activity in the four states, the Interstate 10 region between Southeast Louisiana and Northwest Florida is the only location where the aerospace interests of all four intersect. It's a 350-mile stretch along the northern Gulf of Mexico and something of a showcase for all four where growth in one area of the corridor can benefit all four.



The I-10 region has a long history of involvement in aviation. It's where the Navy established its first, and for a long time only, air station. It's home to two NASA operations involved in building and testing the next generation of NASA spaceships, and where the new breed of private space companies builds and tests space hardware.

It has significant military aviation activities, including pi-

lot training and aerial weapons development. It hosts military commands, including U.S. Air Force Special Operations.

It's where research is conducted not only in aerospace but in related fields like high-performance materials, artificial intelligence/robotics, geospatial applications and more.

Many of the region's aerospace activities put it in select "clubs." With an Airbus assembly line, it joins a group of sites where large passenger jets are assembled, and having two NASA facilities puts it in the small space-flight group. It's also the only region that trains pilots to fly the fifth-generation F-35 and F-22.

And to their credit, educators in the region are taking steps to ensure the region has ample opportunities to train students for careers in aerospace and related fields.



Analysis

Three events that could help you excel

When there are three interesting gatherings coming to the region, the only way to approach it is in the order of appearance. One of them is near the end of August and the other two are in October, one at the beginning and one in the middle of the month.

I'll be there for all three, even for the stuff that's not aerospace-related but still interesting. Here's a rundown of what to expect.

Industry Day

Want to know more about the defense market outlook or about rapid contracting? How about unlocking tools and partnerships for small business success? Or perhaps you're more interested in aerospace, or economic issues for Northwest Florida.

If so, you'll want to consider attending the 2017 TeCMEN Industry Day Aug. 29 at the Emerald Coast Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach.

The center is at 1250 Miracle Strip Parkway, and the Tuesday event begins at 7:30 a.m. and wraps up at 5 p.m. It's presented by the Technology Coast Manufacturing and Engineering Network (TeCMEN), the Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County and Okaloosa County.

Industry Day is expected to draw between 250 and 275 participants to the all-day event.

"We would encourage attendees to participate all day," said Linda Sumblin, manager of TeCMEN. That's because it's packed with information.

The opening keynote address at 8:40 a.m. will be by Allan Bense, former Florida speaker of the House and Triumph Gulf Coast chairman. As you know, Triumph Gulf Coast is the non-profit corporation that will be responsible for distributing \$1.5 billion in economic damages money from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

That's 75 percent of all funds recovered by Florida for economic damages to the state that resulted from the spill. The 75 percent will go to the eight counties disproportionately impacted by the spill. They are Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, Franklin and Wakulla.

Then there's Stephen Berthold of Eastern Shipbuilding in Panama City, which in September 2016 was awarded a contract to build Offshore Patrol Cutters for the Coast Guard. The company is on a growth curve.

There also will be a panel discussion moderated by Maynard Factor of Micro Systems, focusing on the defense market outlook. Panelists are Hank Sanders of Boeing, Woody Tignor of L3 Crestview Aerospace, Roger Ogilvie of BAE Systems, and Monty Watson of Lockheed Martin.

If your business is involved in defense activities - or wants to be involved - this panel you'll want to hear.

And you'll want to stick around for the next one as well. It's on Rapid Contracting for new, novel and transformative solutions for government and war fighters. The military for some time now has understood that some of the best solutions can be found outside normal channels, so if you are the creative type, this one is a must.

It's moderated by Chris Rohe of the National Advanced Mobility Consortium, a nationwide alliance of traditional and nontraditional small businesses, large defense contractors, academic institutions and other research organizations involved with the translational research and development of the complete range of prototype, ground vehi-



David Tortorano

cle and robotics systems and technologies.

Panelists are Anthony Melita, National Spectrum Consortium, Luke Gianelloni, AFRL Munitions Director Program Manager for PIA with DI, and Charlie Zisette, National Armaments Consortium, the industrial and academic component of the DoD Ordnance Technology Consortium.

In the afternoon, there's another panel discussion on unlocking tools and partnerships for small business success. Moderated by Dr. David Goetsch, panelists are John DiGiacomo, PTAC/SBDC, Laurie Moncrieff, Doolittle Institute, and Kevin Carr, FloridaMakes.

Finally, Daryl Taylor of Airbus in Mobile, Ala., will give a talk at 2 p.m. Airbus is moving towards building four A320 series jetliners each month at the Mobile final assembly line.

Throughout the day there will be the exhibit hall open for networking opportunities.

Sumblin said the event offers an opportunity "to connect with industry in our local area." The panel discussions will highlight "the great and exciting things that are happening in local area," she said.

Sumblin, former executive director at Career Source Okaloosa Walton, took over the position from Jim Breitenfeld. She's encouraged about the outlook for the economy.

"I think it's very promising right now," she said, adding that the county is positioned very strongly.

For more information or to register, visit www.tecmenindustryday.com.

Gulf Power Economic Symposium

For the 21st year now, Gulf Power is bringing to Northwest Florida its popular economic symposium. This year it returns to Sandestin.

The 21st Gulf Power Economic

Symposium is scheduled for Oct. 1-3 at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort. Last year it was held in Panama City.

I've been going to these for several years now, and as many as 600 show up. I usually have to pick the day I want to attend. That's always a challenge, and this year the organizers have made it no easier for me.

The first day is always for folks to show up and sign-in - and also get in some golf if they so chose. And let's face it. Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort is just the kind of place where you would want to spend a day with nothing in particular planned.

The second and third days are where you can find the meat, so to speak. One talk I'm particularly looking forward to is by Peter Zeihan, a geopolitical strategist, founder of Zeihan on Geopolitics and author of *The Accidental Superpower*.

This is a book has a title that can't help but intrigue. Published in 2014, it forecasts the collapse of the global order. He has also written a follow-up, *The Absent Superpower*.

In *Accidental*, his thesis on how the success or failure of nations depends on geography. It's a matter of topography, soil quality, access to water - especially access to water - and other natural factors that determine the winners and losers.

He says geography has shaped the power of states by facilitating or impeding their economic growth. He argues that no country has benefited more from its geographic features than the United States. It has the world's most extensive natural network of waterways, more arable land than any other country and the unparalleled protection afforded by two oceans - one hell of a moat, if you will. By contrast, China has been less lucky, with scattered waterways, limited agricultural land and insecure frontiers.

He posits that at because the United States is moving towards energy independence, it will at some point aban-

don the Bretton Woods international trade and monetary system that has been the international order since the end of World War II. It made the United States and particularly the Navy the guarantor of free trade. The United States will no longer have to secure the Middle East for strategic reasons of energy supply, he writes.

Demographics also plays a huge role. Population are aging, and most advanced countries are no longer producing a sizable enough new generation to support the older generations. While the United States will feel that pinch, it's nowhere near the problem faced by other countries, particularly China.

The second day of the symposium also includes the Northwest Florida Made panel, moderated by Mark Wilson, president and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce. Then there's the topic of the National Economic and Energy Outlook, with speaker Tom Fanning, chairman, president and CEO of The Southern Company. He's also chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and former president and CEO of Gulf Power.

There's also a panel called "Talent Talks," moderated by Madeline Pumariega, chancellor of the Florida College System. Panelists are Vance Aloupis, CEO of The Children's Movement of Florida; Hershel Lyons, chancellor of Florida Public Schools, Devin Stephenson, president of Northwest Florida State College, Martha Saunders, president of the University of West Florida, and Randy Hanna, dean of Florida State University Panama City.

And speaking of talent, Molly Fletcher, CEO of The Molly Fletcher Company, is also scheduled to talk about unleashing your potential.

There's also the Florida's Economic Update by Cissy Proctor, executive director of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, followed by a talk on Regional Economic and Prosperity by Zack Jenkins, director of the HAAS Center at the University of

West Florida. Then Kim Wilmes, president and CEO of Florida's Great Northwest, will moderate a Site Selection Panel.

So you can see my dilemma.

For more information or to register, visit www.gulfpowersymposium.com.

Aerospace Alliance Summit

I've only missed two of these summits, which launched in 2011 with the inaugural event in Sandestin. Last year it was held in Gulfport, Miss.

This year it's returning to New Orleans Oct. 12-13 at the Renaissance New Orleans Arts Hotel. The welcome reception and dinner is at the National World War II Museum.

The last summit attracted about 130 business, economic development and academic leaders from the four states. It's a relatively small gathering, but they are all movers and shakers.

The message they heard last year was upbeat. Speaker Richard Aboulafia of the Teal Group noted the aerospace industry was the strongest on the planet, and he said this region is well-positioned for growth, especially in light of its political power.

The agenda has not yet been released, but likely will be this month.

For reservations, call 877-622-3056. You can also go online to register at <https://aws.passkey.com/go/AEROSPACEALLIANCE-ANNUALMTG>.

For more information you can also get in touch with Melissa Medley at 850-443-2808, or you can email her at mmedley@aerospacealliance.com.



To keep up with aerospace news from the Gulf Coast I-10 region, [sign up](#) for the free daily news feed, delivered to you inbox.