

SUMMER 2006

The Official Publication of the Louisiana Wildlife Agents Association

LOUISIANA

GAME WARDEN

www.lwaa.org



IN THE PATH OF HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

Wildlife Agents Provide Critical Rescue and Recovery Expertise



KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO
GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Baton Rouge

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May 19, 2006

Colonel Winton Vidrine
Enforcement Division
Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
P. O. Box 98000
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000

Dear Colonel Vidrine:

In 2005, our citizens endured the worst hurricane season in this great state's history. The men and women of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, led by Enforcement Division personnel coordinating the agency's search and rescue efforts, represented this state in exemplary fashion as first responders following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

With minimal or no communications capability in the recovery areas following each storm, amid environmental conditions that presented uncertain threats to personal safety, and with security questions ongoing in locations cut off from local law enforcement, Wildlife and Fisheries personnel led the way on the water bringing those in need to safety.

The effectiveness of this agency, in numerous recovery mission situations, could not be questioned even by Congressional review panels that looked closely at the overall state response to both storms.

Thank you again on behalf of all the citizens of Louisiana. It is comforting to know that Wildlife and Fisheries is ready to answer the call when needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Babineaux Blanco".

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor

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State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

MITCHELL J. LANDRIEU
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 44243
BATON ROUGE, 70804-4243

April 8, 2006

Dear Wildlife and Fisheries Agents:

On behalf of the state, I would like to commend you and thank you for your efforts during Hurricane Katrina. The professionalism of Wildlife and Fisheries agents is a tremendous source of pride and inspiration for me and for all of our citizens.

The equipment and the agents of your department were essential in reaching our people who needed help. Without Wildlife and Fisheries, many rescue efforts would not have been possible.

Had it not been for the help of Wildlife agents and your equipment, including 4x4 vehicles and flat bed boats, I would not have been able to do my work to help the state and local governments communicate. I was honored to serve with you in the days following the storm.

When Louisiana citizens were in harm's way, trapped by rising waters on rooftops and in attics, Wildlife and Fisheries agents rose to the challenge. For this, we owe you a debt of gratitude.

Sincerely,

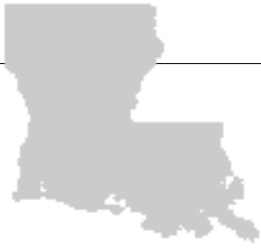
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitch".

Mitch Landrieu



Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu (standing at front of boat above) assisted LDWF agents with a number of rescue missions.





DWIGHT LANDRENEAU
SECRETARY,
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

Hurricane Recovery Response: Katrina and Rita

As designated first responders working under the umbrella oversight of the state Office of Emergency Preparedness, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) enforcement agents were among the first search and rescue (SAR) teams to arrive in hurricane-impacted areas for both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

Using small watercraft for their mobility in shallow and debris-strewn, deep water flood situations, LDWF enforcement agents, biologists, technicians and specialists conducted thousands of rescue missions to bring storm victims to safety as the after effects of both storms left citizens in distress. In the greater New Orleans area, those missions included patient evacuations from hospitals and medical centers without power and depleted of supplies in the aftermath of Katrina. On the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, along the southern edge of St. Tammany Parish and in the northern

part of St. Bernard Parish, LDWF personnel worked in smaller groups to get people out of flooded areas.

Many of those same LDWF personnel regrouped and went in to Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion parishes after Rita made landfall, just three weeks later. The SAR missions were fewer and the numbers rescued did not run into the thousands, but the effort was in response to communities in need once again.

The dedication of more than 300 LDWF staff members involved directly in search and rescue, including those who lost homes and personal belongings in the same flooded communities in which they worked, was a shining example of public servants meeting a challenge of historic proportion. An additional 100 LDWF staff members were involved in support efforts to supply those working in the recovery areas with fuel, food and water. More than 21,000 people were eventually rescued by LDWF-coordinated small boat rescue missions following the two storms.

The search and rescue missions staged by LDWF personnel were supported and supplemented by a network of professionals and civilian volunteers including the U.S. Coast Guard, the Louisiana National Guard, the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division, local parish sheriff's offices and parish Offices of Emergency Preparedness, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, the Louisiana Office of State Parks, the Louisiana Geological Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey, as well as fish and wildlife agencies and search and rescue teams from a dozen states.

Coordinating a waterborne rescue effort of this size and scope was a major undertaking, but LDWF personnel made it happen and are to be commended. ■



CHIEF'S MESSAGE



COL. WINTON VIDRINE
LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION
ADMINISTRATOR

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to all the enforcement agents who participated in the search and rescue efforts during and following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The agents of the Enforcement Division, at all levels, worked countless hours in stressful and dangerous environments with very little food or rest to accomplish an amazing task.

Many of our agents themselves suffered major losses including homes, vehicles and other personal property,

but continued search and rescue operations giving little or no regard to their personal situations.

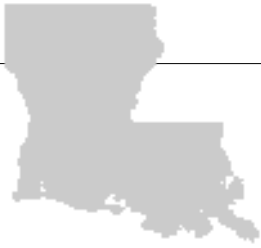
As a result of all of our efforts over 22,000 lives were saved. I attribute much of our success to the extensive training agents receive, a strong chain of command and simply having strong-willed tough agents with a get-it-done attitude.

I have received numerous compliments from other agencies regarding our response, professionalism and work ethic. I hope in the near future we can return to some sense of normalcy and get back to our primary mission of wildlife and

To our readers: As a new LWAA board member and the headquarters representative, it is an honor to give this space over to our Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries chief of enforcement, who has written a personal note of sincere appreciation to the agents of the Enforcement Division who responded to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.—Lt. Jay Diez, Headquarters Representative

fisheries resource protection.

Again, I thank all of you for a tremendous job, well done. ■



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



LT. REMY BROUSSARD
ACTING PRESIDENT

Last year turned out to be one for the record books. Let's hope that the records that were set in 2005 will never again be broken. Much has changed in our state, just as much has changed in our country.

I am writing this message as the acting president of Louisiana Wildlife Agents Association. Lt. Darryl Moore, our past president, has been reactivated into the U.S. Air Force and is currently serving his country in the Middle East. Let us all continue to show how very proud we are of all of the men and women serving our country.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita left much of southern Louisiana in a state of disre-

pair, if not totally devastated. The articles and photos in this issue of *Louisiana Game Warden* are, as usual, the work of the agents themselves. It is their narrative and their photos that bring this publication to life.

Many of us have dealt with the aftermath of last year's two unprecedented hurricanes on very personal levels. Seventeen of our wildlife enforcement agents suffered catastrophic damage to their homes and property. Many of them have not been able to return home even months later, and some of them never will.

Following the passage of the storms, these agents continued to work side by side with their fellow agents. Not only did they remain in harm's way and work through the

storm rescue efforts but they also continued to work their districts and assist other law enforcement agencies for weeks after the devastation. They carried out their duties even though their families were many miles away and their homes were virtually destroyed. My hat goes off to all of those agents. They truly epitomize the type of agent that we all strive to be.

Our state has suffered untold damage, but our profession has grown stronger from the trials and tribulations that we have encountered. We have learned much during the last several months, and as a result we will be better prepared to face future challenges. ■