

LDWF Enforcement and Hurricane Katrina: A Chronology of Action

Friday, Aug. 26, 2005

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) employees move boats and equipment along the coast inland to staging areas. Hurricane Katrina enters the Gulf of Mexico. Pass-a-loutre and Pointe aux Chenes Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are secured, and boats are moved out of harms way. As predictive models of the storm's path are moved closer to Louisiana, evacuation of staff to the west gets under way. Staffs from all coastal WMAs are moved out of coastal facilities along with equipment that is deemed movable. All LDWF staff is alerted to remain on call and to evacuate as parish officials dictate. Enforcement commanders move to the state Emergency Operations Center to monitor storm and to establish communications with HQ and regional offices concerning personnel and coastal equipment evacuation inland. A total of 225 enforcement agents are involved in the preparation.

Saturday, Aug. 27, 2005

Employees secure and evacuate Pass-a-Loutre WMA and all boats, equipment and staff are removed or secured at all remote WMAs and refuges. Enforcement stages 60 boats with staff at headquarters in



Baton Rouge. All other LDWF watercraft (250) are organized at regional offices and are poised to head to the affected area after storm passage for rescue operations. The Emergency Operations Center (OEP) is manned 24 hours from this point forward.

Sunday, Aug. 28, 2005

Enforcement assists with the evacuation of New Orleans area staff (all divisions), many of who were moved to Baton

Rouge headquarters. All enforcement staff is put on alert to respond to storm effort.

Monday, Aug. 29, 2005

After Hurricane Katrina moves through Louisiana, LDWF staff re-establishes communications with evacuated staff and mobilize for rescue of stranded citizens in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington parishes. Enforce-

ment dispatches 60 boats to greater New Orleans area and launches at I-10 and Causeway to begin search and rescue (SAR). Thirty boats in The Florida Parishes begin SAR.

Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005

Enforcement coordinates all additional LDWF small flat bottom and shallow V-hull boats to assist in SAR, departing at 5 a.m. from Baton Rouge and from all regional offices outside of rescue area. More than 300 LDWF staff are directly involved with SAR, including some from other divisions within the department. By this time, 100 staff members are working in support of SAR missions. Search and rescue continues into the night and some 3,000-plus persons are rescued.



Wednesday, Aug. 31, 2005

Enforcement continues to coordinate small boat rescue efforts and makes calls for assistance from out-of-state agencies with small boat SAR capabilities and enforcement training. Texas Parks and Wildlife provides 50 boats for SAR effort. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the Louisiana Office of State Parks brings boat total to 450 involved in SAR efforts. Flooding increases due to breaches in levees. Cumulative estimate of 6,500 persons rescued.

Thursday, Sept. 1, 2005

Enforcement gains support from 12 additional out-of-state agencies. Along with the professional law enforcement officers, there are other search and rescue teams arriving from around the country. SAR task forces are assigned to evacuate persons from area hospitals and medical centers. Search and rescue has now estimated 10,000 cumulative total persons rescued by department personnel.

Friday, Sept. 2–Saturday, Sept. 3, 2005

Enforcement continues SAR. Evacuations are completed from Charity and Methodist hospitals as well as Chalmette, Lakeview, Tulane and University medical centers. A cumulative total of 18,000 persons rescued.

Sunday, Sept. 4, 2005

Enforcement continues to coordinate small boat rescues through peak recovery dates. There are 400 boats and staff from LDWF as well as 392 out-of-state personnel and 274 boats involved in SAR. An estimated cumulative total of 20,000 persons rescued.

Monday, Sept. 5, 2005

SAR continues: 21,000 estimated cumulative total persons rescued. Water levels are receding in most areas, making small boat rescue difficult. Airboats are still being used in many areas otherwise not accessible. Search and rescue crews are reporting that many people who rode out the storm and originally refused to leave are now coming out. Added agency support from out of state has provided relief for LDWF and

all associated rescue personnel involved in the initial days of recovery. Staging areas are now providing food and rest stations for crews working 12- to 16-hour days.

Tuesday, Sept. 6–Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2005

Small boat rescue teams are still encountering some residents who refuse to leave. Rescue numbers have leveled off—less than 50 reported for this day. Search crews are beginning to re-sweep areas to ensure that those who want to leave are given access to transport. Twenty LDWF flatboats and airboats with staff remain in rescue area to support local police and emergency rescue efforts. Ninety LDWF employees have been displaced from homes and/or job locations.

Thursday, Sept. 8–Friday, September 9, 2005

SAR continues as areas are re-swept to ensure all wanting to leave have adequate access to transportation. Teams are reporting that many New Orleans residents are still refusing to leave their property.

Saturday, Sept. 10–Sunday Sept. 11, 2005

Enforcement division agents work with New Orleans police department in response to specific calls for evacuation assistance throughout the city. Most enforcement agents resume their regular patrol duties. An Enforcement Strike Force contingent remains in the Greater New Orleans area until no longer needed. Total cumulative number of rescues stands at 30,000. ■

Enforcement Headquarters Honors Nine State Agencies

Col. Winton Vidrine of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries recently honored nine state wildlife agencies for their outstanding contribution to the citizens of Louisiana. Their participation, dedication and professional assistance in the massive search and rescue efforts following Hurricane Katrina contributed to the saving of many lives.

Plaques were awarded to wildlife agencies from nine states: Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio, Missouri, South Carolina and North Carolina. ■



Col. Vidrine displays the plaque presented to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.