

## PHOTO GALLERY



## LDWF Sets Up Web Site to Help Citizens Locate Displaced Boats

by Capt. Ronald Morris

**T**he Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has been working with other state and federal agencies on the issues of dislocated personal property following Hurricane Katrina and Rita. This includes all titled and registered vehicles and boats. FEMA and the governor's office have set up the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), which is a strike team to oversee abandoned boats, vehicle removal and disposal.

All agencies have been meeting with FEMA concerning the debris removal caused by the hurricanes. For the most part, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has taken the lead on the cleanup of debris and white goods. The more difficult problem matching up displaced vehicles and boats with their owners.

It is estimated that 20 percent of boats in Louisiana are insured, and the insurance companies have been on location since the early days after the storms, retrieving their salvage and paying claims on insured personal property. That leaves the problem of the approximately 80 percent of uninsured displaced boats that are still resting on public right of ways and public property and on private property, including some boats that came to rest on houses.

To help resolve this problem, LDWF has set up a web site to help citizens search for hurricane-displaced boats by registration number and determine their location. The database is available at: [www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov). Enforcement Division agents have been tagging displaced boats, capturing all identification information and marking the boats with a sticker indicating the date and location they were found. This information is sent to Baton Rouge and uploaded to the web site. We've had positive feedback from the public and will be adding this process to the master plan for state cleanup.

FEMA is working with the state of Louisiana to pay for one contractor to pick up all displaced personal property. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development is the lead agency managing this contract. The Louisiana State Police, the Department of Motor Vehicles and LDWF will have oversight with the contractors on the cataloging of boats and cars and notification of property owners.

LDWF estimates that 25,000 to 35,000 boats were displaced by the two hurricanes. ■