

# The Katrina Ribbon Recognizes Valor and Service

by Lt. Col. Keith LaCaze, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement, Field Operations

Wildlife enforcement agents may not always be recognized for every act of valor, kindness or great effort in the performance of their duties. But there are times when recognition does take place. The policy manual of the Enforcement Division provides for awards for valor, lifesaving and meritorious service. The criteria for these awards are quite stringent and those agents who earn them have good reason to be proud.

The recipients of such awards wear service ribbons just below the badge on the class A uniform. The service ribbons, similar to military service ribbons, vary in color. The color of a ribbon signifies what award or accomplishment is represented by this decoration. Other ribbons signify successful completion of academy training or time in service. All are worn with pride.

Our search and rescue efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were unprecedented in the history



of the Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division. Thousands were rescued from flooded and destroyed homes, churches, hospitals and everywhere else where people took shelter from the storm and flood. Many lives were saved and injuries treated, and the hungry and thirsty were given food and water. Many times the agents gave their own meager supplies of food and water to evacuees, and they performed countless other humanitarian acts—some witnessed and some known only to the giver and the receiver.

Every wildlife enforcement

agent responding to the disaster demonstrated valor and performed meritorious service and distinguished acts far beyond the call of duty. Every agent was a lifesaver. We can in no way ever give adequate recognition to the few who saved so many.

Wildlife Enforcement Col. Winton Vidrine and the administrative staff of the Enforcement Division were eager to provide recognition and acknowledgement to all those agents responding to Katrina. As a result, the Katrina Service Ribbon was designed and commissioned

as the official service ribbon awarded to those agents. The ribbons have been distributed and are now worn on the class A uniform. It is a purple, gold and blue ribbon with a gold fleur-de-lis at its center.

If you happen to meet a wildlife enforcement agent and notice this ribbon pinned just below the badge, you may want to thank him or her for a job well done and acknowledge that you know that ribbon was hard won and well deserved. ■