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LDAF-DEQ enter cost-saving, resource-sharing agreement

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Departments of Agriculture and Forestry and Environmental Quality signed an agreement today that is the first important step in a comprehensive plan that will save the state money while combining resources. As both agencies continue to work more efficiently, the new partnership will allow for information sharing as well as cost savings.

DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch and LDAF Commissioner Mike Strain, D.V.M., signed the agreement today at the LDAF headquarters in Baton Rouge. DEQ will move five employees from its Baton Rouge laboratory office to Agriculture and Forestry offices.

"We're facing limited budgets and this was one of the ways we thought would best benefit the taxpayer," Strain said. "It's important that we make good use of our resources and the opportunity was presented to work with the DEQ and provide space for their laboratory. We're happy to have a good relationship with DEQ and Secretary Hatch and will continue to look for ways to work with other agencies in a cooperative manner to more effectively use state assets."

The DEQ employees use compressed gas and other materials to conduct air analysis. These compressed gases required for the operation of the equipment used to conduct air analysis require a secure ground level area of sufficient size to allow for the delivery and storage of the compressed gas cylinders which is not available at the Galvez building. Also, at times it is necessary to bring the compressed gas cylinders inside the building which for safety reasons is not appropriate for the Galvez type office building. The LDAF building will provide the employees with adequate resources and the environment to safely conduct their work but at a lesser cost than the lab.

"This is just one example of how the two agencies can assist each other and we look forward to a long partnership that will continue to grow," Hatch said. DEQ is striving to do more with less by making sound business decisions. Partnerships such as this help the citizens of the state because cost savings allow agencies to continue to provide needed services. We believe this is the first step in a working relationship that will lead to efficiency measures for both agencies statewide."