DISCOVER DEQ
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER

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New secretary at LDEQ is a familiar face

On April 1, former Assistant Secretary for Assessment Roger Gingles moved out of his fifth floor office and into the 10th floor Office of the Secretary. Gingles is the new LDEQ secretary, but he is hardly new to the agency.

New LDEQ Secretary Roger Gingles

Gingles had a 27-year career with the agency before retiring in 2013. He started at the agency as an environmental scientist, moving up the ranks to senior scientist, program manager and assistant administrator. His experience at LDEQ includes assignments within several areas, including water quality, solid waste, legal affairs and remediation. He also was the state Brownfields coordinator for about 12 years. Prior to working at LDEQ, Gingles was a sanitarian with the Louisiana Department of Health for three and a half years, so his career encompasses more than 30 years in the health and environmental protection field.

Gingles was lured out of retirement by former LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown, who said at the time of Gingles' rehiring in 2017, "We interviewed several outstanding candidates for this position, but Roger's knowledge, experience and training stood out. I believe he will be a great addition to the LDEQ executive staff."

For the next six years, Gingles oversaw the Air Planning and Assessment Division, the Remediation Division, the Water Planning and Assessment Division and the Underground Storage Tanks Division. When Brown left the agency at the end of April, Gov. John Bel Edwards picked Gingles to fill the vacancy.

Although Edwards' tenure ends in January 2024 and Gingles will likely leave the agency once again, he emphasizes that he is not an interim secretary.

"I am the secretary. I intend to continue the course Dr. Brown set, but I will run the agency. I want us to provide the people of Louisiana with a level of service that results in what Dr. Brown called "continuous improvement."

"I am proud to serve Louisiana as LDEQ secretary, and I am proud of LDEQ's staff as well. I think our workforce is the brightest, most well-educated, hard-working group in state service. We are well equipped to carry out our mission to protect Louisiana's air, water and soil," Gingles said.

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Gingles holds a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from LSU Shreveport and a Master of Science in public health from Tulane University. He is a native of the small north Louisiana town of Stanley, which he proudly points out is the home of Stanley Tools, whose ubiquitous yellow-handled screwdrivers reside in toolboxes across the world.

Gingles is married to the former Kelly Broome, who worked at LDEQ for 25 years, and they are the parents of two adult daughters.

LDEQ releases second monthly podcast

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) Communications Section has ventured into a new project, starting an official LDEQ monthly podcast. Each month, the podcast, appropriately named "LDEQ On Air," features one guest answering questions about their role at LDEQ. The goal of the podcast is to inform the public on how issues are handled at LDEQ, how LDEQ is organized, the people behind the processes at LDEQ and answers to questions about agency issues.

The second episode features LDEQ Secretary Roger Gingles as he discusses his background before becoming Secretary and his goals for the position and the department.

A podcast will be released every third Thursday of the month. An easy way to remember that is that it's the day after the "Ask the Governor" radio show. Communications won't be accepting live questions but will accept email submissions with suggestions.

To listen, visit the LDEQ webpage at ***www.deq.louisiana.gov/podcast***. LDEQ On Air is also available on ***Apple Podcasts***, ***Spotify***, ***Google Podcasts*** and ***Podbean***.

If you have any questions or would like to submit question suggestions, please email the LDEQ Communications Section at ***SECTCOMMUNICATIONS@la.gov***.

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Message from the Secretary

Roger W. Gingles

LDEQ Secretary Roger Gingles speaks to participates of the "Love The Boot" Litter Cleanup at LDEQ Headquarters.

This is my first monthly message as secretary, and I am proud to be here to extend greetings to all. I am the new secretary, but I think a majority of people in the agency already know me. I am a longtime LDEQ employee. To those of you who haven't met me, I hope to get to see you in person in the next few weeks and months.

I have been in office since April 1, almost a month, and I've already faced some challenges. It's a tough job. Luckily, I have the good example of Dr. Chuck Carr Brown to draw on for inspiration. One thing he always emphasized was "do your best." If you do that, you will be able to meet any challenge. He believed in the staff at LDEQ, and I do too. I am blessed with a very good executive staff, and I rely on them heavily to keep things going in the right direction, just as Dr. Brown did.

Love the Boot Trash Pickup was my first agency-wide event as secretary, and it was a good one. Things got cleaned up, people helped the environment, and we all had fun. We had a great effort here at headquarters and cleaned up litter for several blocks around the building. Staff at the regional offices participated in clean up events at their offices too. Good job! I am proud of your work.

One thing I want to mention. Last year, the smoke break area at the Galvez Building got cleaned up. It was totally filthy with cigarette butts, but it got picked up nicely by Love the Boot volunteers at last year's event. This year we returned to the same spot, and it was filthy with cigarette butts again. It's ridiculous. I won't stand for it. If you choose to smoke and someone accommodates you by creating an assigned smoking area, don't trash it up. Pick up your refuse or else lose the privilege.

The Legislature is in session right now. There is a lot of activity in and around the Capitol. That includes LDEQ. Some of the staff will be going back and forth to the Capitol to monitor bills that have some effect on LDEQ. There is at least one bill that will require LDEQ staff to go and answer questions. If you are someone who is involved with supporting the agency at the Legislature, be ready to go this month.

Names and faces may change, but the agency goes on. We are here to protect human health and the environment. That stays the same no matter who is in the secretary's role. I am glad of that, and I hope to keep LDEQ on track to continue to provide the same high level of service that the people of Louisiana deserve.

I know you all feel the same way. See you soon.

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LOVE THE BOOT week

KEEP LOUISIANA BEAUTIFUL

LDEQ holds "Love the Boot" Cleanup Day

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) participated in Keep Louisiana Beautiful's "Love the Boot" Cleanup Day Wednesday, April 19. The day started with fellowship, breakfast, a pep talk and a thank you from LDEQ Secretary Roger Gingles at headquarters.

LDEQ's Baton Rouge cleanup team, Team DEQ, consisted of 43 employees who used grabbers, latex gloves and 30-gallon bags to collect 33 bags of litter. The most commonly collected items were cigarette butts, plastic bottles and aluminum cans. Plastic Mardi Gras beads, plastic bags and construction debris were also collected along the grounds. LDEQ's volunteers covered areas from Spanish Town Road to Main Street and from Fourth Street to Eighth Street.

LDEQ regional offices in Lafayette -- Acadiana Office, Team ARO -- and Lake Charles -- Southwest Office, Team SWRO -- also participated in the cleanup day April 18 and April 20, respectively.

Team ARO's event saw 15 volunteers to collect thirteen 42-gallon bags of litter and approximately 100 pounds of other bulk trash.

Team SWRO's event had 15 volunteers who collected twenty one 30-gallon bags of cans and bottles, fast food wrappers, shingles, tin, vinyl siding, fiberglass and construction debris left over from Hurricane Laura along the side of the road and ditches.

"It's important to keep Louisiana beautiful and clean up the litter around the state to maintain the beauty of Louisiana", said Roger Gingles, Secretary of LDEQ. "Littering is unacceptable and a testament to how much people value their communities and the environment. I'm proud of the LDEQ employee volunteers from around the state who spent their morning cleaning up their respective Louisiana cities."

Team DEQ volunteers had fun during the cleanup event and some said they can't wait until next year's cleanup. Keeping Louisiana clean is fundamental to maintain the natural beauty of our unique state.

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LDEQ Love The Boot Week Cleanup

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Air Quality Awareness month begins with Air Quality Awareness Week

"Working together for clean air" is the theme of Air Quality Awareness Week 2023.

Air Quality Awareness Week provides an opportunity for people to learn what causes poor air quality and how they can prepare for and respond to events and environments with poor air quality – not just during the month of May, but year-round!

May 1 through May 5 are the event's dates and each day has a designated theme to focus attention on different areas of concern.

May 1: Monday focuses on wildfires and smoke, and while Louisiana does not have as much of that as other parts of the country, it is important to be aware of the effects.

May 2: Tuesday focuses on asthma and your health and is actually World Asthma Day. Many people nationwide suffer with this respiratory disease and their well-being depends onthe quality of the air they breathe.

May 3: Wednesday focuses on Air Quality and Transportation. Transportation is an integral part of air quality since many vehicles produce volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOX) which are components of the pollutant ozone.

May 4: Thursday focuses on Air Quality and Climate. Climate affects the air in many ways. Ozone is formed on sunny, still days when a sunlight fuels a chemical reaction with VOCs and NOX that forms ozone.

May 5: Friday focuses on Participatory Science -- also known a citizen science, community science, volunteer monitoring, public participation in scientific research and other terms -- which uses the collective strength and knowledge of the public to gather and analyze data to help answer environmental and public health questions.

So take some steps to make your environment and health better by participating and leaning about what you can do.

There are many ways in Louisiana to participate in protecting your environment and health with action and knowledge. Sign up for air quality forecasts and notifications at ***https://airquality.deq.louisiana.gov*** or subscribe to ENVIROFLASH, LDEQ's and EPA's free Air Quality Notification system at ***https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/enviroflash***.

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LDEQ removes Comite River bacteria impairment listing

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) has removed the Comite River's secondary contact recreation (SCR) bacteria impairment listing in the 2022 Clean Water Act (CWA) Integrated Report. The river currently doesn't surpass the fecal coliform standard for SCR in Louisiana.

The river was originally placed onto Louisiana's 2012 CWA Integrated Report impairment listing. Fecal coliform bacteria was detected in the water body and originated from poorly managed septic systems. The river couldn't support its SCR use because of the high bacteria levels present in the water.

The Comite River watershed drains 48,920 acres of open land, pastures and wetlands. Louisiana rural communities rely on on-site sewage disposal systems since there aren't public wastewater treatment systems near them. The septic systems along the Comite River were poorly maintained and high concentrations of coliform bacteria polluted the river. SCR use is supported only when no more than 25% of monthly water samples taken exceed a fecal coliform density of 2,000 colonies/100 milliliters.

Twelve water samples were taken from the Comite River from October 2017 to September 2018 and almost half of the samples taken exceeded 2,000 colonies/100 milliliters. Poor maintenance of the septic systems was found to be the cause of the deterioration of water quality. Out of the twelve water samples taken from October 2019 to September 2020, only one sample exceeded 2,000 colonies/100 milliliters.

"Removing the Secondary Contact Recreation bacteria impairment for the Comite River watershed benefits the Baton Rouge and Central communities by keeping water clean for activities such as boating and wading," said Greg Waldron, LDEQ environmental scientist.

LDEQ has contracted with the Capital Resource Conservation and Development Council (CRC&D) since 2012 to put into effect a list of initiatives like water quality monitoring in the Comite River and home septic system inspections. The ultimate goal with the contract has been to improve water quality by reduction of nonpoint source pollution. The Comite River watershed was monitored from 2012 to 2020 and pollution improved significantly. CRC&D found that 567 of 1,542 home septic systems functioned improperly, and 339 of them were ultimately repaired.

Thanks to the partnership of LDEQ and CRC&D, the Comite River is cleaner and residents can enjoy the water in time for summer recreational activities.

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LDEQ employees receive new roles

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has been experiencing many changes since Roger Gingles was appointed to be the new secretary for the Department. Many familiar names and faces have changed positions and responsibilities within the agency. Here are some of them:

Jonathan McFarland
Chief of Staff

McFarland, who joined LDEQ in 2001, is a licensed Louisiana Professional Engineer with a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental engineering from Louisiana State University. McFarland had been in the position of administrator for the Water Planning and Assessment Division in the Office of Environmental Assessment. He has been appointed to be the LDEQ Chief of Staff, a position on the executive staff that provides advice and information to the secretary and coordinates executive staff activities.

Erin Folse
Administrator, Underground Storage Tank Division, Office of Environmental Assessment

Folse serves as the administrator of the Underground Storage Tank Division. She began her career with LDEQ in 2003 as an environmental scientist in the Remediation Services Division. Later she moved to the Underground Storage Tank Division where she was responsible for all data reporting, UST special projects and tracking both the UST Compliance and UST Remediation processes. She also has assisted in the design and implementation of the department wide data systems. Prior to working at LDEQ, Folse has 13 years of experience in environmental laboratories where she served as a lab technician and organic lab team leader, and in the chemical industry where she was a lab technician, chemist and environmental coordinator.

Folse earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology with a minor in chemistry from Nicholls State University.

Gary Fulton, Jr.
Assistant Secretary, Office of Environmental Assessment

Fulton began his career at LDEQ in 1996, and his positions at the department have all been related to the investigation and remediation of contaminated sites. He is a registered Professional Geoscientist in the state of Louisiana with nearly 30 years of experience in that field. Fulton began his consulting career in 1989 as a hydrogeologist, working along the east and gulf coasts from Maryland to Louisiana. He is now the assistant secretary for the Office of Environmental Assessment. Fulton oversees the Divisions of Air Planning and Assessment, Water Planning and Assessment, Underground Storage Tank and Remediation.

Fulton has a Bachelor of Science degree in geology from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Amanda Vincent
Administrator, Water Planning and Assessment Division, Office of Environmental Assessment

Vincent has worked at the agency since 2007 and had held positions in Water Planning and Assessment, Water Permits and Surveillance divisions. Amanda earned both bachelors and masters of science degrees in biology from Southeastern Louisiana University, a masters of business administration degree in project management from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and a doctorate degree in coastal sciences from The University of Southern Mississippi. Amanda is a certified project management professional, and currently serves as Vice President of the Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA).

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LDEQ On The Move

First United Methodist Church Gonzales Community Outreach

LDEQ Environmental Scientists Melanie Bauder and India Ambeau participated in the First United Methodist Church in Gonzales' Community Outreach Event on April 15. They presented the Enviroscape model to show the causes and sources of nonpoint source pollution.

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Who's Who At LDEQ?

Mackenzie Toussel – Mackenzie Toussel, Office of Environmental Services, Water Permits Division

Toussel received a Bachelor of Science degree in natural and resource ecology and management from LSU in May of 2022. She joined LDEQ as an environmental scientist in December 2022.

Toussel's experience includes a stint as a student worker in a Coastal Wetland Plant Ecology lab where she had the opportunity to conduct an independent research project and interning with the Inventory and Monitoring Division of the National Park Service. Toussel assisted primarily with vegetation monitoring, but also had exposure to various other projects such as water quality monitoring and amphibian monitoring.

In her free time she enjoys playing tennis, crafting and hiking with her recently rescued dog.

Brett Bryant – Environmental Project Specialist, Office of Environmental Services, Permit Support Division,

Bryant studied general studies with a focus on natural sciences at The University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL). He joined LDEQ in March 2023 and is working permit support as an environmental project specialist. He is working with master files and updating data information and is eager to grow into this field. He hopes to become more knowledgeable about the systems in place to protect the environment.

In his free time he enjoys playing music and spending time with friends.

Gabrielle Gremillion – Environmental Scientist, Office of Environmental Enforcement, Water Enforcement Division

Gremillion is a recent graduate of Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU). She worked at Café du Monde while pursuing her degree in Integrative Biology. She joined LDEQ in March 2023 as an environmental scientist working in Water Enforcement.

In her free time, she enjoys kayaking, cooking and going on nature walks with her dog. She is eager to help protect Louisiana's natural beauty.

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Louisiana Department Of Environmental Quality's First Quarter Summaries

1st Quarter 2023 Enforcement Actions:
http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/enforcement-actions

1st Quarter 2023 Settlement Agreements:
http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/enforcement-division

1st Quarter 2023 Air Permits:
http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/permits-issued-by-calendar-quarter

1st Quarter 2023 Water Permits:
http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/lpdes

1st Quarter 2023 Solid and Hazardous Waste Permits:
http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/waste-permits