



DISCOVER DEQ

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



September 2016 Issue Number: 56

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LDEQ resumes the mercury sampling program

Environmental scientists from LDEQ's Acadiana Regional Office visited Chicot Lake in Evangeline Parish to collect fish for testing as part of the department's mercury sampling program.

The last round of sampling fish for mercury was done in the spring of 2010, until changes in budgetary priorities forced the program into hiatus. A consent decree between LDEQ and NRG Louisiana Generating allocated funding to resume the program in late 2015 as part of a beneficial environmental project. Under the plan, 29 sites will be sampled in southwest Louisiana by the end of the year.

Over the next three years, LDEQ expects to retest all water bodies currently under fish consumption advisories related to mercury. As data is collected under the program, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) will reevaluate the current fish consumption advisories for the sampled water bodies.



LDEQ Environmental Scientist Staff Shane Miller (left) transfers sampled fish from a scoop net into a holding tank. The tentacle-like electrode apparatus (lower left) temporarily stuns nearby fish, which makes it easier for the team to select and retrieve a variety of species.

Since the team from LDEQ's Acadiana Regional Office has years of experience in conducting the fish sampling plan statewide, they conducted the initial runs and have begun training other regional offices on the procedure. So far, the Southwest Regional Office (based in Lake Charles) has undergone training, with the regional offices based in New Orleans and Baton Rouge slated to follow. This will allow each regional office to conduct sampling runs in their respective parishes, thereby facilitating a more streamlined approach and a faster turnaround.

Mercury, which is a naturally occurring element, can also enter a water body through air pollution, chemical spills or discharges. Through a process known as bioaccumulation, if fish ingest natural food sources that are contaminated with mercury and anyone eating those fish may then take in unacceptable levels of mercury as well. A variety of health problems can ensue, so it's important to conduct sampling efforts in order to gather scientific data to get a picture of how these waterways are faring.

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LDEQ Environmental Scientists Corey Schwartzburg (left) and Shane Miller measure and sort fish for processing at Lake Chicot in Evangeline Parish

To do that, the team sets out on a specialized fish sampling pontoon boat, which patrols the water body, stopping at various points where fish are most likely to gather (typically in areas around cypress trees, lily pads or around dense vegetation). Fish are shocked with two sets of electrode rigs (one positioned on either side of the boat) that hang over the front of the boat and are sunk just below the surface of the water.

The electrode apparatus (which resemble umbrella spokes) deliver a charge that temporarily stuns any fish in the immediate vicinity. As those fish float to the surface, they are scooped up with nets and placed into a collection bin.

“We want a good representative sample of fish by length and species,” Shane Miller, LDEQ environmental scientist staff with the Acadiana Regional Office, said. “We look at what species of fish are listed on the advisory for the water body, and try to pull a variety of those.” For Lake Chicot, a mercury advisory is listed for largemouth bass and bowfin. Game fish, those popularly fished for by anglers,

are the targeted sample as those fish are more likely to be consumed by the public. Actual risk levels vary greatly depending what fish are caught where they are caught and how big they are, so it’s vital to check the fish consumption advisory lists on the LDEQ website.

At Lake Chicot, the collected fish averaged between 10 and 17 inches in length, and included largemouth bass, bluegill, bowfin (known as “choupique”), red-ear sunfish and black crappie.

After sorting through the catch, the fish are measured, evaluated, bagged by length and type and placed on ice. The next day, the team will clean the catch, then store it in a freezer. The fish will then be submitted to a lab at the University of Louisiana at Monroe, where technicians will analyze the species for any presence of mercury contamination.

Once those results are submitted to LDEQ, a decision will be made in conjunction with LDH on whether safe consumption protocols or additional sampling events are necessary for the respective water body. LDH will then determine if the advisory for fish consumption can be removed or amended at that water body, and LDEQ will review any impaired waters for future sampling.

Since the goal is to ensure fish and waterways are mercury free, it’s imperative that communities are engaged in watchdog efforts that keep our lakes, bayous and rivers clean and free of any impairment. LDEQ encourages the public to report illegal dumping to LDEQ’s SPOC hotline at: 1-888-763-5424 or by filling out an incident report form online at: <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/apps/forms/irf/forms/>.

For more information about LDEQ’s mercury initiative, including a list of water bodies currently under an advisory, please visit the LDEQ website: <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/PROGRAMS/MercuryInitiative.aspx>.

Additional information can be found on the Louisiana Department of Health website at: <http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/564>.



Message from the Secretary

Chuck Carr Brown, Ph.D.

August's woes bled into September this year as south Louisiana struggled to deal with the aftermath of the Great Flood of 2016. Many at LDEQ had to deal with flooded homes.

There was the ongoing challenge of traffic exacerbated by relief traffic and debris removal vehicles. Stores and businesses closed. Schools closed. Many churches were flooded. Everyone is tired of debris piles lining the road.

In the midst of all that, a profound tragedy struck LDEQ. On Sept. 14, longtime LDEQ employee Greg "Coop" Cooper passed away after falling ill at work.

Greg was 55 and was due to retire at the end of this month. He was a much beloved member of the LDEQ family, often holding court on one of the public benches on the portico in front of the Galvez Building. He always had a friendly wave or positive greeting for anyone who passed him, including me.



Scenes like this debris lined street are rapidly disappearing from the Baton Rouge landscape, but the memory of the flood that brought so much destruction to south Louisiana will be slow to recede. Now is the time for renewed patience.

I enjoyed seeing Greg there, and I was touched to see the spontaneous tribute to his memory that was erected on "his" bench. Life is short and none of us know when it will suddenly end. A memorial service for Greg was held at DEQ on Sept. 27.

Everyone should keep in mind that you need to deal with stress or else it will get worse and worse and even make you ill. LDEQ employees are dealing with many stressed-out flood victims as they go about their jobs and especially at public meetings. Sometimes members of the public can direct their stress and frustration at the very people who are trying to help them. Keep a cool head and remember that these folks' lives have been damaged.

Getting through this flood event, dealing with our own losses and dealing with a high level of frustration all around will require our highest level of professionalism. I know you will always comport yourselves in a way to reflect well on the department. But don't forget to be patient and kind with yourself too. Don't let stress get you down.

Finally, I want to thank you all for the display outstanding generosity and compassion for those among the staff who have suffered flood damages. We collected more than \$6,700 for the flood relief effort through donations and the proceeds from sales of popcorn on the 9th floor.



LDEQ mourns the passing of Gregory “Coop” Cooper 1961-2016

Longtime LDEQ employee Gregory Cooper passed away suddenly Wednesday morning Sept. 14. He was 55. Affectionately known as “Coop” to everyone, he was known for his laid – back style, warm attitude and easygoing approach to life.

Cooper was set to retire on Sept. 30 after more than 26 years of service to the state.

A native of Woodville, Miss., Cooper graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Alcorn State in 1983 and proudly served his country in the U.S. Navy from 1984 to 1989 on the USS Denver. He came aboard at LDEQ in January 1990 and immediately began to play a significant role in establishing the early operational systems for the department as LDEQ began to expand and develop.



Gregory Cooper will remain in our hearts and his spirit will set the tone of how we should conduct ourselves – with an endless zest for learning and a sense of pride in serving others through a positive attitude and a welcoming heart.

Out of the office, he was always ready to lend a hand to anyone in need and used his expert knowledge of automotive engines to help others with their car troubles, and he was ready to offer advice on a wide array of topics. In the office, he assisted his co-workers in navigating the inner workings of many of the department’s databases, projects and programs. One of Cooper’s responsibilities was administering fees related to hazardous waste, groundwater, NORM radiation and Louisiana Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (LELAP), and he was the resident expert on how those programs operated.

But it was his kindness that stood out, as he was always there to listen, laugh, advise and be a sounding board to anyone who needed a sympathetic ear.

“Coop was an environmental scientist with superior organizational skills and a very positive attitude about life – he never had a cross word for anyone and was truly a class act,” said Jeff Baker, one of Cooper’s former supervisors. “He was steady, highly reliable and was a stabilizing force who conducted himself with an even keel – always ready to lend a hand.”

A testimony to Cooper’s easygoing nature was his frequent presence on a bench outside LDEQ’s Galvez Building, where one could find him taking an occasional break. There, he would enjoy a few moments of relaxation and say hello to friends, acquaintances and strangers. Not simply a bench, it grew to be a comforting place for Cooper as well as those who sought his counsel. Baker referred to it as the “counseling bench,” where Cooper was always available to listen and raise the spirits of those who needed his warm, sound words of encouragement.

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The morning after his passing, many stopped by the bench to reflect, as others placed flowers and photographs on the spot where he used to sit. It will forever be his place, serving as a reminder for us to take it easy and allow some time to stop and smell the roses.

Cooper’s co-workers, including Ashley Broom and Elizabeth Dequeant, related many stories of his deep generosity, support and caring nature over the years. So many stories were told, that a much longer article would still provide only a small glimpse into his impact on not only the department, but all of the lives of those around him.

“He was always helping someone and was a pillar for his family,” Broom noted.

“Coop helped build the trails at Clark’s Creek, helped his neighborhood through the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav and was all about providing service to others,” Dequeant said.

Those memories, along with countless others, point to Cooper’s loss as one that leaves a tremendous hole in their lives that will never be filled.

Cooper once tagged an important file in his office as “the key is God’s love” – a phrase that speaks to his faith and spiritual beliefs. Now not just a file name, Cooper has passed that key on to those in need as his memory forever rests in those words.

Coop is survived by his son, Jeremy, and daughter, Bree, who both currently attend college in Baton Rouge.

Barksdale Air Force Base active in recycling and sustainability program

At Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier Parish, recycling and sustainability efforts have a substantial impact in promoting the concept of reduce, reuse and recycle. In fact, during fiscal year 2015 alone, their practices diverted more than 107,500 tons of recyclable materials from landfills.

As of August 2016, there are 110 refuse containers and 62 recyclable containers distributed along the flight line, hangars, base housing areas, squadron and wing units, and next to major buildings such as the commissary and base exchange.

Hosting upwards of 15,000 people on the base at any given time means that trash can accumulate quickly and in large quantities. With a constant flow of incoming and outgoing families and personnel on the base, it’s imperative to continually push the sustainability message -- informing newcomers to the base about the importance of recycling, reducing and reusing. Not all “trash” is actually trash.



Alfredo Garza, base recycling manager, points out signage indicating what items the Recycling Center will accept.

In 2007, Executive Order 13423 mandated that all federal facilities were to maintain recycling and waste prevention programs that were cost-effective and results-driven. This Order effectively refined and expanded upon the existing programs that were in place at those facilities, and Barksdale was no exception.

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Apart from the usual cardboard, paper, plastic, aluminum and metal recycling intake, there is the concrete recycling operation that's been conducted on the base for several years. With a strong and sound runway as the foundation – so to speak - of the Air Force, any divots, cracks, potholes and other imperfections on the tarmac need to be corrected immediately and continually -- particularly as heavy B-52s land, taxi and take off around the clock.

To address this, a concrete grinding and replenishment operation ensures the runways meet the federal guidelines. As sections of unserviceable runway are removed, a base contractor fills in those sections with material that consists of previously torn up concrete that's been ground down into a sandy consistency, processed and repurposed into new concrete. New sections have an expected 50 year lifespan, so the quality must meet stringent specifications and standards for longevity and strength.

While older concrete gets a second life through the effort, it's also a way to eliminate eyesores and environmental problems that go along with piles of broken rubble that are simply left abandoned. In addition, the project not only saves resources, time, labor and transportation costs, but can be done in-house under a fairly quick turnaround. Repurposing concrete is another way Barksdale limits what it sends to the landfill.

Another example of waste reduction at Barksdale is the Airman's Attic – a drop-and-swap shop where military personnel and their families can exchange serviceable uniforms, household goods and furniture. Approximately 42 tons of material is collected there each month – an impressive number that alone promotes reuse while reducing the landfill intake.

Cardboard is probably the most common recyclable material on the base, as approximately 40 tons a month are generated and recycled just from the base commissary. While prices are in continual flux, the current rate (as of August 2016) is about \$68 per ton of cardboard that can be recouped – material that is often just discarded. Certain companies will pay for packaged recyclables, so it's important to build those relationships as it can mean dollars in your pocket.

"Many don't see the value of recycling, but I tell them it equates to money – it's a commodity," Garza said.

Though all units, businesses and organizations on the base actively participate in recycling, word of mouth and individual responsibility make the difference in keeping the program alive.

To facilitate personal responsibility, an outdoor recycling location on the base is open 24/7 for anyone to drop off materials in a recycling bin. While some simply attempt to use the location as a dump site, the base is strict on what items are allowed – and cameras are always watching. Signage is displayed at the drop off point, and every bin contains a sign listing what is acceptable. In addition, a Goodwill shed is there to accept clothing, housewares, books, furniture and items that can be re-sold.



Broken concrete is stacked, crushed, ground down and ultimately repurposed with other material to fill imperfections in the runway.

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Recycling bins are distributed throughout the base, as well as at the Recycling Center. Signs on the bins list what materials are acceptable.

Appliances, mattresses, televisions and furniture should not be left next to dumpsters with the idea that “someone else will handle it.” Doing so constitutes illegal dumping and can result in fines and/or enforcement action. Do the right thing by discarding a used mattress or broken sofa properly in a large roll-off dumpster that’s intended to accept those items.

Garza promotes surveillance efforts as a deterrent and implores everyone to be a watchdog for illegal dumping and report any occurrence of illegal dumping to the authorities.

“Recycling and sustainability really work when everyone participates, so we can all make the difference in our daily routines in what we simply throw away.”

Tips on eliminating waste:

- Donate used clothing, furniture, books and household items to your local charity or thrift store
- When purchasing a new item, check with the retailer on their recycling policy for that item
- Check with your city or parish recycling center on what materials they will accept
- Appliances, televisions, computers and other electronics can be donated to local electronic stores
- Used paint, batteries, chemicals and oil can be dropped off at household hazardous materials days – contact your parish for information
- Used plastic grocery bags and compact fluorescent bulbs can be recycled at certain hardware stores – check your local listings
- Promote recycling in your household and in your neighborhood by requesting a recycling can from your city or parish or asking about how you can start a program in your area
- Place an ad for a used item, or donate it to a thrift store, homeless facility, furniture or electronics repair shop, charitable organization or to a friend or neighbor in need
- Build a compost bin in your yard where you can deposit fruit and vegetable peels, used coffee grounds, eggshells and other organic matter. Mixing the material with dirt creates nutrient-rich soil that will be a boost for your garden.



LDEQ hosts booth at Baton Rouge “Extreme Green” sustainability event

On Saturday, Sept. 10, LDEQ participated in Extreme Green, a sustainability fair and 5K run hosted by BREC -- the Baton Rouge Recreation and Park Commission.

Held at the Perkins Extreme Sports Park in Baton Rouge, the event kicked off at 7 a.m. and highlighted the benefits of recycling and sustainability. There were several vendors and sponsors on hand to explain what they do to promote sustainability programs.

In addition to LDEQ, local vendors included Bike Baton Rouge, the LSO Foundation, Baton Rouge Group of the Sierra Club, Capitol Area Native Plant Society, Capitol Area Animal Welfare Society (CAAWS), the Louisiana Sea Grant, the Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater Baton Rouge, Paddle BR, Front Yard Bikes, East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners and LSU’s School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences.

Marissa Jimenez and Linda Brown Hardy with LDEQ represented the department at the sustainability booth – interacting with the public and promoting LDEQ’s green projects.

“We presented Enviroscope, which is a demonstration for nonpoint source pollution,” said Jimenez. “We also handed out promotional items and materials such as various fliers on how to dispose of pet waste, what to do with household hazardous waste and other green-oriented practices.”



Marissa Jimenez, her daughter, Zoe, and Linda Brown Hardy (right) host LDEQ’s informational booth at the Extreme Green sustainability event in Baton Rouge.

The event is a celebration by BREC of Earth-friendly practices through an outdoor expo where participating companies, agencies and organizations come together to showcase what they do in the betterment of Louisiana’s environment.

Sponsors for the event included Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Bricks and Bombs, Tredici Bakery and Café, Fleet Feet Sports of Baton Rouge, Albertsons and Atlas Dermatology.

Louisiana Municipal Association Convention is an opportunity to learn

The Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA) held their 79th Annual Convention in Alexandria at the end of July. LDEQ exhibited and participated in the events. Linda Brown-Hardy, LDEQ environmental scientist senior and outreach director gave participants information concerning many LDEQ programs, such as the Environmental Leadership Program (ELP). The ELP encourages schools and universities, businesses, non-governmental organizations, municipalites and industry to go above and beyond environmental regulation to improve the environment. EnviroSchool, LDEQ’s free workshops on subjects of interest to citizens, was another program discussed. David Thompson, financial services, gave participants information on financial matters regarding the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

On two days, vendors were given the opportunity to explain their products and services at their booths. From wastewater to safer playgrounds built in neighborhoods to greener ways to dispose of garbage, they were ready to present cleaner and greener solutions to participants. Mayors, council members, clerks and citizens from cities, towns and parishes in Louisiana attended the convention to get information that will assist their communities.

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Attendees stop by the LDEQ booth to learn about the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund.

Sen. Bill Cassidy spoke to the group at a scheduled prayer breakfast. He stressed the importance of the LMA for Louisiana. Dr. Rick Brewer, the president of Louisiana College, was a guest speaker and entertainment was provided by Voices of Louisiana College. At the luncheon the next day, special guest was Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser. The Lieutenant Governor's Beautification Awards were presented.

The LMA provides a unified voice for Louisiana's municipal governments, and its mission is to advocate, educate and empower local governments to efficiently and effectively serve the citizens of Louisiana. Today, there are 305 LMA members comprising 127 villages, 112 towns, 64 cities, and two parishes. Each local government belongs to one of the 10 LMA Districts (A-J). Classifications of municipalities are set forth by La. R.S.: 33:341. Each municipality is categorized into population tiers as a village, town, or city.

LDEQ participates in St. Jude's Educational Day in Zwolle

In early September, Ronnie Kay, environmental scientist staff with LDEQ's Northwest Regional Office, gave a presentation to more than 350 second grade students at the annual St. Jude's Educational Day in Sabine Parish. Linda Brown Hardy with LDEQ was on hand to furnish pencils, book markers and wrist bracelets to the children in attendance.

Held in the town of Zwolle, the annual event is an educational day where students can learn about various careers and what functions agencies and organizations perform. Representatives from other state agencies and local municipalities also gave presentations and handed out promotional information.

Kay's presentation was on water quality activities that protect not only fish and wildlife, but also human activities such as swimming. He brought a Hydrolab water meter and demonstrated how LDEQ environmental scientists measure water quality in the state's water bodies.

The weekend events, which included food vendors and entertainment, raised donations to benefit St. Jude Children's Hospital.



Ronnie Kay gives a presentation to second graders during the Educational Day.



LDEQ Human Resources has returned to headquarters

The LDEQ Human Resources Section has returned to headquarters and is located on the 9th floor next to Undersecretary Karyn Andrews' office. Our new HR staff is a diverse and competent group of professionals whose cumulative state service is in excess of 70 years. They offer a variety of consultative and advisory services, ranging from issues related to hiring, position classification, and compensation, to benefits, payroll and retirement. Our HR staff strives to offer excellent customer service while also focusing on efficiency and integrity.

- **Donia Gillespie** is the Director of Human Resources. In addition to her administrative duties, Gillespie specializes in policy development, employee discipline, and EEO compliance. She also consults on a number of HR-related issues. (Donia.Gillespie@la.gov (DEQ) or 2-3828)
- **Doug Bordelon** is the Human Resources Manager. Bordelon works primarily with issues related to FMLA, Worker's Compensation, employee discipline, new hire orientation and training and development. (Doug.Bordelon@la.gov or 2-1325)
- **Jennifer Hardee** is a Human Resources Specialist who provides guidance and assistance with questions related to hiring, class and pay, and the Performance Evaluation System. (Jennifer.Hardee@la.gov or 2-3851)
- **Gloria Robertson** is a Human Resources Analyst, and she advises on questions related to hiring, class and pay, and the Performance Evaluation System. (Gloria.Robertson@la.gov or 2-3824)
- **Clarissa Adams** is a Human Resources Specialist. Adams focuses primarily on La Gov HCM reporting and special projects. She also assists with questions and issues related to benefits, retirement, payroll, and timekeeping. (Clarissa.Adams@la.gov or 2-3856)
- **Sarah Pierce** is a Human Resources Analyst and her areas of expertise include benefits, retirement, timekeeping and payroll. (Sarah.Pierce@la.gov or 2-3841)

Please join us in welcoming our Human Resources staff back to Headquarters!



Staff Attorney Chris Ratcliff retires from LDEQ

After 28 years of service to Louisiana, Chris Ratcliff has decided to move on to the next chapter and enjoy some free time with his family – with a visit to Thailand on the agenda. A retirement party was thrown on Sept. 21 in honor of his service.

Born and raised in Baton Rouge, Ratcliff graduated from Louisiana State University with a bachelor's degree in Management and Administration in 1984. He went on to earn a law degree from the LSU Law Center in 1987, and subsequently began his career with the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, where he handled environmental enforcement matters for four years.

In 1992, Ratcliff joined LDEQ's Legal Division and served in several capacities, including Ombudsman and attorney supervisor. As a staff attorney and attorney supervisor, he advised and represented the agency on enforcement, permit appeals and remediation issues in matters spanning the scope of the agency's regulatory programs.

Ratcliff has been a guest lecturer on environmental law at Louisiana Tech University, Nicholl's State University and LDEQ's EnviroSchool program. He also served as a council member and chair of the Environmental Law Section of the Louisiana Bar Association.

His interests include hiking and backpacking in the Rocky Mountains, especially Glacier National Park. He enjoys fishing, traveling, home improvement projects and gardening.

LDEQ wishes Chris success and happiness in his future endeavors.



Chris Ratcliff shares some memories with co-workers at his retirement party.



Rhonda McCormick – New regional manager for Acadiana Regional Office

Rhonda McCormick has been appointed to the position of regional manager for LDEQ's Acadiana Regional Office in Lafayette and the Kisatchie office in Pineville. McCormick graduated from the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology (minor in Chemistry).

McCormick has 18 years of environmental experience with LDEQ. She began her career in 1998 in the Air Quality Division, Asbestos Lead Section in Baton Rouge where she reviewed asbestos management plans and conducted community outreach concerning lead based paint hazards.

In 2000, McCormick transferred to the Surveillance Division at the Acadiana Regional Office and began working primarily as a solid waste inspector and an asbestos/lead inspector. In 2011, McCormick became the Surveillance Division supervisor in the Lafayette Office. She continued conducting solid waste inspections and complaint investigations while working as the Surveillance Division Supervisor.



Rhonda McCormick

Who's Who At DEQ?



Charlotte Goudeau, legal, Office of the Secretary

Originally from Opelousas, Goudeau received her Juris Doctor from LSU Law School in 2015. In 2016, she graduated from Georgetown Law with a master's in environmental law. At Georgetown, she worked as a research assistant for one of the top international environmental law scholars. She began working at LDEQ in August.

During her free time, Goudeau enjoys traveling, visiting with family and friends, and boxing.



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Louisiana Department Of Environmental Quality's Third Quarter Summaries

Third Quarter 2016 Enforcement Actions:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/DIVISIONS/Enforcement/EnforcementActions.aspx>

Third Quarter 2016 Settlement Agreements:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/DIVISIONS/Enforcement/SettlementAgreements.aspx>

Third Quarter 2016 Air Permits:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2922/Default.aspx>

Third Quarter 2016 Water Permits:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2899/Default.aspx>

Third Quarter 2016 Solid and Hazardous Waste Permits:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/divisions/wastepermits.aspx>

