



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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### **Temple-Inland agrees to state request to support sampling of private water wells and seafood**

**BATON ROUGE** — The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) are working with local officials in Washington and St. Tammany parishes to conduct a new round of precautionary testing of a sample of private water wells along the Pearl River. Temple Inland agreed to support the state's request to begin precautionary testing earlier today.

Initial testing of drinking water from public water systems by DHH and of the river water impacted by the discharge by DEQ showed non-detect levels of volatile organic contaminants, as well as acceptable levels for other types of potential contaminants. The new testing is being done out of an abundance of caution.

For private well sampling, DHH is working with local officials and engineers in Washington and St. Tammany parishes to identify a sample of 10 registered private water wells in each parish to test. Those samples are being collected today and tomorrow and will be analyzed over the weekend by DHH's lab in Metairie, which also analyzed the public water system samples taken earlier this week. Results are expected back by Monday and Tuesday.

More information about private water well safety and testing can be found at [www.privatewaterandsewage.dhh.la.gov](http://www.privatewaterandsewage.dhh.la.gov).

### **Seafood testing also set to begin**

DHH and LDWF will also begin testing seafood from areas that could have been or will be impacted by the "Black Liquor" that was formed after the Temple-Island discharge. Temple Inland agreed to support DHH's water testing efforts earlier today.

LDWF began pulling live samples of crab, shrimp and finfish following a protocol similar to the one used during last year's BP oil spill, and will provide those samples to DHH to be tested. LDWF fisheries biologists are sampling at multiple locations, including in the upper, middle and lower Pearl River, two control sites, and sites in the Rigolets at the mouth of the Pearl River and in Mud Lake.

Because of the nature of potential contaminants from the mill, DHH will conduct more complex testing that requires specialized equipment and specially trained personnel. Results are expected by the middle to end of next week.

DHH, which oversees safety of the state's oyster areas, has been monitoring Oyster Areas 1, 2 and 3, which could get water from the Pearl River for signs of the "Black Liquor." Samples already pulled from those areas routinely will be used to conduct baseline testing so that if the discharge material gets to the area, DHH will be able to do additional testing to ensure the safety of the oysters in those areas.

Temple-Inland, which has admitted responsibility for the incident that led to a large fish kill, agreed to the state's request to pay for the precautionary random testing of private water wells and seafood.

### **Incident Command Centers in St. Tammany and Washington Parishes**

Incident command centers for LDWF and DEQ have been set up in Washington and St. Tammany parishes to assist in the response. LDWF Mobile Command is located in Washington Parish just south of Bogalusa at Pools Bluff off of Hwy 21 in Washington Parish on the Pearl River. This is a high-profile location from where cleanup vessels and other vessels are

launching. DEQ is sending a command post to this same location as water sampling along the Pearl River continues. The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and DEQ have command posts set up in St. Tammany Parish at the Crawford Landing boat ramp.

### **Water quality back to normal in some areas**

Water samples throughout the Pearl River from the discharge point at Temple-Inland Bogalusa Mill to below Pools Bluff show the water quality is back to normal. These are areas that are above the plume. Information from a DEQ over-flight today shows a dramatic improvement in water quality since yesterday. As the plume dissipates it gets harder to identify. Preliminary in-depth water quality samples taken on Aug. 14 at the discharge point returned from the lab today and show there were no chemicals of concern released from the Inland-Temple Mill outfall. Dozens of daily samples have been taken in the Pearl River since August 13. Recent assessments show water quality levels in Pearl River, from Washington Parish to the end of the river, are not lethal to fish.

### **Further Information Available**

People with questions about the incident can call the DEQ hotline number is 225-342-1234 or 1-888-763-5424. The DEQ Regional Office number is 504-736-7701. The LDWF 24-hour hotline for reporting further fish kill impacts is 1-800-442-2511. For health questions people can call the Louisiana Poison Center, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-222-1222. Media inquiries should go to 225-219-3964 or 225-329-9743.

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