

Pearl River Fish Kill Incident Summary: LDEQ 8/17/2011 5:00 PM

- On Wednesday, DEQ staff helped draft Q&A for Community Relations staff and participated in morning conference call with multi-agency task force.
- DEQ staff has not verified the death of any air breathing animals.
- Ross Barnett Reservoir will be open to increase flows in the West Pearl River.
- On Wednesday, DEQ staff was also involved in reviewing the In-Mill Sampling Protocol for Start Up and the Bogalusa Effluent Treatment System Start Up Plan.
- On Wednesday, DEQ staff produced agency timeline for Web EOC update, GOHSEP, and Governor's office, responded to numerous calls from citizens, the media, and investment firms and discussed the need for fish clean-up hotline with paper mill officials. Eight complaints have been received regarding the fish kill.
- On Wednesday, DEQ staff provided an overflight of the affected areas and observed the following: the southern most extent of visible dead fish is West Pearl @ Hwy 90, there is no obvious black water in East Pearl, blackwater is mixing in the Rigolets with no well-defined leading edge, and one tributary (Porters River) very full with dead fish.
- On Wednesday, there were two DEQ sampling teams deployed. *Team 1* working the lower Pearl River and Rigolets. "Black water" visible at the mouth of the West Pearl at the Rigolets. The tide is currently falling and the leading edge is moving with the tide in the Rigolets toward Lake Borgne. Samples were collected at the mouth of the Pearl River and at the leading edge of the "black water" in the Rigolets. *Team 2* worked the lower Pearl River above I-59. All WQ parameters in the river stem were normal. Samples were collected in Doubloon Bayou. The WQ parameters were normal. Samples were collected in the Porters River tributary off of the West Pearl. The water in this location showed levels of DO at 2 range.
- On Wednesday, three air samples were collected. (1) at Doubloon Bayou, (1) at Porters River, and (1) at Herwig Bluff Road.
- On Wednesday afternoon, the DEQ Command Post arrived at the Command Center at Crawford Landing. DEQ staff is on-hand and manning the Command Post. DEQ staff participated in all meetings and many interviews were conducted. Fish cleanup crews started today and were dispatched from several strategic boat launch locations throughout the Pearl River system.

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- **DEQ was first informed of dead fish in the Pearl River by news media approximately 10 am Saturday 8/13/11.** Water Quality Specialists responded and confirmed dead fish in the upper reaches of the Pearl River near Bogalusa and observed dark waters discharging from an outfall associated with the Bogalusa Paper Mill. Water upstream the discharge was normal.
- **On Saturday 08/13/11 at 5:30pm Temple-Inland called the DEQ complaint line and at approximately 8pm called the State Police emergency notification line.**
- On Sunday 8/14/11 DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch issued a verbal Cease and Desist order to the paper mill to cease discharge of their facility's effluent. Discharge ceased at approximately 12 noon.
- DEQ staff returned on Sunday to collect samples from the Paper Mill. Samples for parameters associated with mill waste water discharge were collected from the discharge stream that was not flowing at the time of collection.
- DEQ staff attended a meeting of state agency representatives and local elected officials at the Bogalusa City Hall on Sunday evening to transfer information on the incident and answer questions.
- On Monday 8/15/11 DEQ Executive staff and Administrator met with mill officials to discuss the incident.
- On Monday, DEQ inspectors conducted a compliance evaluation of their water discharge permit and associated requirements. Report will be finalized when additional information is obtained.
- On Monday, DEQ staff investigated the lower East Pearl and found no new dead fish and dissipating black water conditions.
- On Monday, DEQ staff conducted overflight to track "blackwater" in the Pearl R. system. The leading edge was close to the Hwy 90 bridge on the West Pearl. Trailing edge in the West Pearl appeared to be ~2 miles north of Walkiah Bluff.
- On Monday, Mill officials initiated dialogue with the LDEQ on approaches to rehabilitating the aeration/stabilization basin (ASB) necessary to restore plant waste water flows to those consistent with their water discharge (LPDES) permit that are protective of the environment. A plan to restart discharge will require DEQ approval prior to waste water discharge initiation.
- On Tuesday 8/16/11, DEQ inspectors conducted a compliance evaluation of the hazardous waste (RCRA) requirements for which the mill is obligated. The inspection concluded and the final report is pending.
- On Tuesday, DEQ staff conducted sampling and investigation of the lower West Pearl. The team found 'blackwater' and found dead fish and mussels. Samples were collected for laboratory analyses and measurements of dissolved oxygen were taken.

- On Tuesday, the EPA Regions 4 and 6 held the first of a series of joint Regional Response Team calls for information dissemination.
- On Tuesday, DEQ assisted mill personnel with steps to enable facility contractors to collect and dispose of dead fish in the Pearl River system.
- On Tuesday, DEQ staff conducted overflight to track “blackwater” in the Pearl R. system. The leading edge was in the Rigolets and with an incoming tide was headed toward Lake Pontchartrain.
- On Tuesday afternoon, the mill submitted a plan for restart of the mill.
- On Tuesday afternoon, DEQ staff met to discuss concerns and questions on the mill’s plan to rehabilitate the mill ASB and waste water treatment system.
- On Tuesday MDEQ indicated they are continuing to monitor their side of the Pearl River and that there was a public meeting planned in Walkiah Bluff on Tuesday night.
- On Tuesday DEQ provide a timeline of events as provided by the company to LDHH and MS Dept of Health.
- On Tuesday DEQ provided an electronic copy of the MSDS sheet for the defoaming agent used by the mill to the LDHH as well as graphs of biochemical oxygen demand effluent indicators prior to and after onset of upset conditions at the mill.
- On Tuesday DEQ staff attended a meeting at the request of St. Tammany Parish, where the Parish President announced a declaration of a state of emergency within the parish.
- On Wednesday morning (8/17/2011), DEQ submitted comments on the plan to restart the mill. The company subsequently responded and the proposed revisions are under review.
- On Wednesday, DEQ hydrologists and water quality specialists were dispatched to investigate and sample ‘blackwater’ in areas of tributaries draining to the West Pearl where residential dwelling are located. Sampling and water quality measurements are planned.
- On Wednesday, DEQ staff were dispatched to investigate the leading edge of the ‘blackwater’ as it was last seen in the Rigolets. Sampling and water quality measurements are planned.
- On Wednesday at noon, an overflight will take place to track the ‘blackwater’ presence. Location information will be transmitted to the Unified Command Center in St. Tammany Parish and all other interested parties.
- On Wednesday morning, mill contractors received their fish collection permit from DWF so that dead fish retrievals could commence.