DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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EXHIBIT 17

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DEQ puts comprehensive sampling-result maps on Web site

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality now has information on the sediment sampling results from the New Orleans area on its Web site, www.deq.louisiana.gov. DEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency combined to take more than 800 sediment samples following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The maps and summaries of the results were made available today.

The zip code files contain three categories of information – a regional map, a zip-code map and a written summary of the zip code. To find the zip code you are interested in, click on the banner at the top right of the home page and a list of zip codes will appear. Click on the zip code number to view the information. The regional map shows you where the zip code is in relationship to the rest of the impacted area. Scroll down and the next map shows a close-up view of where the samples were taken in the area. The summary is a written environmental assessment of what was found.

Of the more than 800 samples taken, 40 came back from the lab with readings that warranted further evaluation. None of the sediment data showed any short-term health risks. Although many of the samples taken from the 40 sites that had high readings came from gutters and storm drains, DEQ and EPA have initiated a plan to resample in those areas. EPA and DEQ's goal throughout the sampling effort has been to ensure that levels in residential areas meet residential standards.

"As DEQ, EPA and other state and federal agencies said on Dec. 9, the exhaustive sampling efforts show there are generally no long-term health risks in the impacted area related to environmental causes," said DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel. "Hopefully, these comprehensive maps and summaries will calm some of the fears people have as they return to New Orleans and give a true perspective of what the environment is like in their area."

"We will continue to conduct environmental sampling in the hurricane impacted areas and share information with local officials and the public," said EPA Response Director Sam Coleman. "Helping our partners rebuild hurricane-damaged areas and allowing people to return is one of our main priorities."

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