



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO
GOVERNOR

MIKE D. McDANIEL, Ph.D.
SECRETARY

For Immediate Release
September 27, 2005

Contact: Rodney Mallett
Telephone: 225.219.3964

Early samples show Lake Pontchartrain holding up after Katrina

BATON ROUGE – Recently, officials from the Department of Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency gave a presentation to the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, environmentalists and media. The presentation was based on 46 samples taken by DEQ from dozens of locations in and around Lake Pontchartrain. The sample results show the lake is having minimal effects from Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flood.

Each sample is tested for more than 200 parameters, such as dissolved oxygen, bacteria, metals and organic chemicals. Dissolved oxygen has been found at low levels in some water bodies draining into the lake from the Northshore. This is common after a hurricane because of natural occurrences during a storm that large.

Here is what the initial testing found:

NORTHSHORE: Most of the streams have low dissolved oxygen from the decaying material the hurricane blew into the water. There have been fish kills caused by this low dissolved oxygen. There have been slightly elevated levels of bacteria, but that is common after a large storm because of runoff from septic systems and agriculture fields.

CAUSEWAY: Samples at the causeway showed the water to be as expected for this time of year. There was little evidence of the storm or the floodwater affecting this area of the lake.

SOUTHSHORE: Samples are being taken at five new sites that are ½-mile from the shoreline. These are strategically placed to test water from drainage canals. This area showed good dissolved oxygen levels. All bacteria levels from these sites were well within acceptable water quality standards for swimming. An additional sample was collected nearby from what appeared to be a plume of discharged material from one of the canals. Bacteria levels from this sample were elevated but still within expected levels following a heavy rain event in this area.

EAST SHORE: Sampling in this area has been limited because of access. The few samples taken have been encouraging. The highest reading for bacteria was below the swimming standard.

WEST SHORE: Low dissolved oxygen caused by debris from the hurricane lead to some fish kills shortly after the storm. However, recent samples show the dissolved oxygen to be at normal levels.