



THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Progress Report
on Recovery,
Rebuilding
and Renewal

*Groundbreaking for new Harper McCaughan Elementary School,
Long Beach, Mississippi
Photo Courtesy of the Sun Herald*

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Dear Friends,

The third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina is a major milestone in our journey toward the recovery and renewal of South Mississippi and the Gulf Coast. We always knew that it would take years to recover from

the worst natural disaster in American history. But cooperation among the local, state, and federal governments, the overwhelming generosity of others, and most importantly, the resiliency of our people continues to drive us forward and gives us great progress today and bright hope for the future.

We're immensely grateful for the federal government's unprecedented allocation of \$24 billion to aid in our recovery efforts. Mississippi's approach to recovery has been to build back bigger and better than ever – in education, housing, jobs, and quality of life for South Mississippians. My Administration, under the umbrella of the Mississippi Development Authority, is managing the \$5.4 billion in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) which was a part of the hurricane recovery package passed by Congress and administered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Seventy-one percent of the grant money is being used for housing-related needs and issues for Mississippians. Even now, housing continues to be the Coast's biggest challenge and my Administration's top priority.

We are in the midst of the largest housing assistance effort ever undertaken by a single state. To date, Mississippi has put nearly \$1 billion into programs to restore affordable housing for more than 27,000 low and moderate income level families. And, when the homeowner assistance program finishes servicing the remaining qualified applications this fall, we will have disbursed more than \$2 billion in direct housing assistance to homeowners in our coastal counties. Because of our commitment to providing resources for affordable housing, we're on track to build more affordable housing stock along the Gulf Coast than actually existed before Katrina.

Three years ago, Katrina's raging winds and water decimated thousands of homes along our coastline, resulting in the largest temporary housing operation in FEMA's history. Although travel trailers and mobile homes were originally provided to 45,000 Mississippi families, that number has continued to dwindle, with 4,300 remaining in FEMA trailers today.

Our alternative housing program is working to provide more comfortable and safer alternatives to current disaster housing units. In fact, 2,800 families are in safer, sturdier structures, known as Mississippi Cottages, while they work to rebuild their lives.

Although housing has been our primary focus, there are unprecedented amounts of federal monies being used in other vital areas of recovery. The Mississippi Department of Transportation will utilize \$1 billion of the funds to build new infrastructures, restore highways and bridges and ensure that our citizens are safe on our roads. And the education sector has been allotted \$444 million to aid in retaining teachers, assisting displaced students, and supplying books and materials so our children would have the shortest possible disruption of their school year. Of the federal dollars, \$95 million was used to provide job training and recruitment, to get folks back on their feet and employed. Federal funds have been crucial in restoring health infrastructure, and providing direct mental health services to those affected by the disaster.

All of this progress is critical. But I would be remiss if I did not mention the rebuilding of the coastal economy and our focus on providing more and better jobs. A key component of Mississippi's comprehensive recovery plan has always been the restoration of the Port of Gulfport, not only in the interest of economic development and job creation, but also public safety.

The federal government has provided generous support, but much work remains to be done to safeguard the Coast. Without coastal restoration, including the repair of barrier islands, marshlands and wetlands, coastal Mississippi remains highly vulnerable to strong storms. The federal government should provide funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to implement projects needed to protect our coastline.

While government funding is meeting Mississippi's immediate needs, our long-term recovery will depend on efforts of the private sector. It's imperative that the state and federal government lay the groundwork for a strong economy to ensure that our Gulf Coast will thrive. Ultimately, the overall success of recovery will depend on the jobs and development spurred by private industry.

Should America undergo another disaster of Hurricane Katrina's magnitude, I truly believe other states will uphold Mississippi's disaster recovery program as an example to emulate. The precautionary measures and preparation efforts we're taking now are vital to ensuring that devastation of Katrina's enormity will not happen again.

Like I've said many times before, the most important reason I'm not only optimistic but absolutely confident about Mississippi's future is the spirit and character of our people. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has been a humbling road to travel and I could not be any prouder to fight for our citizens who have lost so much, yet have given even more.

May God continue to bless you and your family as we press on toward the goal of a bigger and better Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,


Haley Barbour

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Photo Courtesy of the Sun Herald

INTRODUCTION

In August 2005, Mississippi was battered by the worst natural disaster this nation has ever seen. The breadth of destruction was unimaginable, except to those who witnessed it with their own eyes. In response, the state launched an unprecedented recovery effort, which strives not to simply replace what was lost, but to use the disaster as an opportunity for improvement.

This report will detail recovery efforts that state government has made in the past 12 months. In the interest of brevity, only the most important activities and programs are included. In some instances, activities from the first two years are mentioned, but previous anniversary reports should be consulted for an explanation of prior activities (these reports can be downloaded at www.governorbarbour.com/recovery).

The accomplishments and assessments of the following areas will be described in this report:

- Disaster Preparation and Mitigation
- Nonprofits
- Housing
- Public Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Education
- Health and Human Services
- Environmental Restoration and Marine Resources

This comprehensive look at Mississippi's renewal efforts is meant to serve as a guide to citizens, governments, organizations and media as they determine post-Katrina successes and failures, both now and in the future.

SUMMARY OF FIRST TWO YEARS

On the morning of August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Mississippi. As the eye passed through western Hancock County, the powerful winds of the storm's upper-right quadrant unleashed a brunt of fury along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Although Katrina's wind speeds made it a Category 3 storm, the combination of the storm's slow speed and the shallow waters off the Mississippi shoreline created a storm surge more closely approximating a Category 5 hurricane, as water rose more than 30 feet in some areas. The storm caused much damage throughout the state, and was not downgraded to a tropical storm until it reached 150 miles inland.

Katrina claimed the lives of more than 230 Mississippians and left more destruction in its wake than any other natural disaster in modern history. By the numbers:

- 80 miles of Mississippi coastline were completely destroyed
- 49 of Mississippi's 82 counties were presidentially-declared as major disaster areas
- 220,000 housing units received damage
- 60,000 housing units received major damage or were completely destroyed
- 46 million cubic yards of debris were deposited
- 80 percent of Mississippians were without electricity

Governor Haley Barbour set recovery efforts in motion immediately, establishing the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal to establish the framework for long term recovery. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) worked to meet immediate needs and begin the long process of restoring public infrastructure.

Governor Barbour lobbied Congress for billions of dollars in recovery funding, and through the determined efforts of the state's congressional delegation, Congress approved an unprecedented relief package. The Administration then began working with state and federal agencies to direct these funds to their best use.

Using the Congressional appropriation, Governor Barbour has implemented a comprehensive plan that addresses all facets of recovery, with priority to rebuilding affordable housing, restoring public infrastructure and creating more and better jobs. All state programs serve as resources to local governments and citizens; ultimately they will determine what their communities will look like five, ten and twenty years from now.

One vital recovery piece from the state's original request has not yet been funded – environmental restoration and hurricane hazard mitigation. The latter will include restoring our barrier islands to their footprint and elevations circa 1920. These islands serve as buffers to the destructive waves brought by hurricanes, much like levees provide flooding protection to New Orleans. The federal government has provided the support to rebuild levees and safeguard Louisiana; now Mississippi is requesting \$1 billion from Congress for its own invaluable protection measures.

In the first two years, the state made tremendous progress in different areas of disaster recovery:

HOUSING

FEMA launched the largest-ever deployment of temporary housing, providing shelter to over 45,000 households. Travel trailer occupancy came down as recovery funds flowed in – in fact, more than \$1 billion was disbursed through the Homeowner Assistance Program in the first two years after Katrina. Additionally, the Mississippi Alternative Housing Program provided better temporary living conditions.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The massive task of removing debris from Mississippi's lands and waters was completed. All highways were reopened. The Bay St. Louis Bridge was reconstructed and the Biloxi Bay Bridge was nearly completed at the time of the second anniversary of Katrina.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Unemployment rates returned to pre-Katrina levels and sales tax revenues were up along the Coast. Gulf Opportunity Zone Act incentives helped spur business recovery.

EDUCATION

All Mississippi schools were open just six weeks after the storm, except for Bay St. Louis-Waveland, which had to wait until November 7 for delivery of temporary classrooms buildings. All schools achieved high marks on state accountability tests that first year.

HUMAN SERVICES

Economic assistance was provided to some 500,000 Mississippians, including provisions for food, medical care, shelter and other temporary needs. The state made over 360,000 mental health visits to disaster victims.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

Beaches were reopened and several coastal recovery projects were planned. Also, partnerships forged among local, state, and federal agencies resulted in the removal of dangerous environmental hazards and the rehabilitation of marine habitats along the Gulf Coast.

PLANNING AND BUILDING FOR THE NEXT DISASTER

Of the most important lessons learned from any catastrophic event are the weaknesses in a state's response system. Unmet needs and limited capabilities are easily detected particularly when a state faces a natural disaster of Katrina's caliber.

As the worst natural disaster in American history, Katrina exposed the Mississippi coastline's vulnerability to damaging storm surge. The destruction from the storm was unprecedented, as water was driven higher and further inland than in any previous hurricane. Many homes and businesses that were thought to be out of harm's way, by being either too high or too far away to be flooded, received extensive flood damage.



Biloxi Bay Bridge

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Three years later, the state is far better prepared for another hurricane or any other natural disaster; in fact, all recovery efforts have been made with the next disaster in mind. Whether it is preparation for an oncoming hurricane, responding during the calamity, or mitigating the damaging effects of wind and water, great strides have been made to reduce the loss of life and property in future events.

PREPAREDNESS

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has made major progress in preparing for future disasters and catastrophic events. Prior to August 2005, MEMA had nearly 70 full time employees. The agency now has about 260 full time employees including nine Area Coordinators positioned in nine districts throughout the state to work with local emergency managers in every county during disaster and non-disaster times.

MEMA headquarters has been relocated from the National Guard Armory in Jackson to a new facility in Pearl. The 72,000 square feet facility includes a 4,000 square feet state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center, compared to the previous center that measured only 500 square feet.

Food and Water

Currently the state has 272 pallets of water stored at a warehouse in Pearl. This equals 470,016 bottles of water ready for immediate distribution and use and enough to sustain over 19,000 people with one gallon of water a day for three days.

The state is storing 56 pallets of Meals Ready to Eat, a supply that would feed 5,376 people two meals a day for three days. Additionally, FEMA has pre-positioned approximately 1.2 million meals in South Mississippi.

Ice

In the months leading up to the three year anniversary, FEMA has made the decision that ice is not a “life sustaining commodity” and will no longer provide ice to the general public. FEMA will, however, provide ice for critical medical needs.

Because of FEMA’s decision, MEMA has been forced to define how ice will be handled by the state. FEMA has agreed that the cost of ice is a reimbursable expense under the FEMA Public Assistance Program during a federal disaster. The Mississippi Department of

Finance and Administration has identified multiple vendors who can provide ice through its Emergency Providers List. MEMA’s position is that ice will not be provided if commercially available, but the agency recognizes that ice is an important commodity in the aftermath of many disasters.

Generators and Lights

Since Hurricane Katrina, MEMA has acquired many generators to provide emergency power for disaster victims. MEMA has sixteen 140 kilowatt generators staged at the state headquarters. Eight of these generators will be assigned and staged with Area Coordinators throughout the state. Additionally, MEMA has two 40 kilowatt generators and three 20 kilowatt generators and seven portable, generator-powered light sets.

MEMA also has either stored or contracted to make available the following:

- 70,000 gallons of unleaded gasoline
- 30,000 gallons of diesel fuel
- 500 military and commercial cots
- Blankets as needed
- 3,350 20x20 blue roof tarps
- 400 20x30 blue roof tarps

Interoperable Communications

The state has long recognized the need for a survivable, interoperable communications environment that would connect local, state, county and federal emergency services agencies. In response to this need, the Mississippi Legislature established the Wireless Communications Commission to implement a statewide communications system for state and local governments that enables interoperability between wireless communications technologies.

The overall vision of the Wireless Communications Commission for the Mississippi Wireless Information Network (MSWIN) project is to develop and implement a wireless network with bandwidth to support full voice, data, and interoperability for all users in the emergency services community.

The ability of responders to work together across agencies during emergency incidents of all types depends heavily on their ability to communicate. The MSWIN system is designed with a simple,

straightforward objective: Get the right information to the right people, in the right place, at the right time. With this objective in mind, the MSWIN system is configured with a robust architecture and disaster recovery features that will provide reliable communications under extreme conditions such as hurricanes, ice storms and floods.

The state is utilizing \$17 million from the U.S. Department of Justice and a \$20 million Congressional allocation to begin implementation of the MSWIN system, but extra funding is needed to complete its interoperability goals.

The state has sought to use FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds for its interoperable communication system, but FEMA has so far refused this request. This disagreement represents one of the state's biggest outstanding issues with FEMA. FEMA's failure to approve the use of HMGP for interoperable communications remains a major impediment to the protection of lives from a natural disaster.

Emergency Notification

In July, the state launched the Connect-GOV mass notification service to ensure residents are able to receive important messages should an unforeseen incident or emergency occur. The service enables the state to communicate with residents during disasters and emergencies. The notification system allows officials to record, send and track personalized voice messages to thousands of residents, businesses, and local agencies in just minutes, through a single phone call. The state can also send text messages to cell phones, PDAs, email accounts, and receiving devices for the hearing impaired.

Messages can be targeted to an unlimited number of groups – everything from mobilizing emergency response teams to coordinating efforts with necessary agencies or volunteers. Messages can also be targeted to specific geographical locations, sending notifications only to the residents within select counties, cities, or even neighborhoods.

Exercises

MEMA has conducted two full-scale hurricane exercises in the past two years. These exercises are designed to test current response capabilities and identify any weaknesses or areas where response can be changed or improved.



Biloxi Bay Bridge
photo courtesy of the Sun Herald

In 2008, the Hurricane Ulysses exercise focused on the needs post-landfall of a large hurricane. The exercise included state and federal agencies and focused on sheltering needs and communications capabilities within the six lower counties.

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) conducted an Interstate Contraflow Plan exercise drill in June 2008. The Contraflow Plan will aid in the evacuation of New Orleans residents and will ease the traffic congestion for Mississippi residents. MDOT has also incorporated an in-house, 24-hour Crisis Call Center to assist the public with questions about road closures and deliver other pertinent emergency information.

In addition to these exercises, all state agencies have become better prepared through in-house training sessions and by arranging availability of emergency supplies.

MITIGATION

In addition to preparing a better response, federal, state and local governments are taking measures to protect buildings and property. Buildings are being built back stronger through new building codes and higher through new flood elevations. Also, more citizens are lessening their risk of loss by purchasing flood insurance.

Shortly after the storm, the Mississippi Legislature mandated stricter building codes for the lower five counties. As a result, local governments now use the 2006 International Code Council standards.

Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) indicate flood plains and required building elevations for acceptance into the National Flood

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Insurance Program (NFIP). FIRMs are based on the 100-year flood level. The flood elevation is determined by the height above sea level at which there is a one percent chance in any given year that flood waters could reach or exceed that elevation.

The ravaging effect of Katrina's storm surge demonstrated the vital need to update the maps. Just three months after the storm, FEMA published Advisory Base Flood Elevation maps for Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties. The advisory maps were meant to provide more accurate elevation guidelines, so that local communities could make better informed rebuilding decisions while new FIRMs were under development. These elevations were not mandatory, but were adopted voluntarily by some jurisdictions. All jurisdictions adopted higher elevation standards, even if not those advised by FEMA.

In November 2007, FEMA released the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs). DFIRM elevations are higher than the pre-Katrina FIRMs, but vary with elevation ordinances adopted after Katrina. For communities that adopted FEMA's advisory elevations, the elevations are generally lower; for those that did not, the elevations are generally 1-5 feet higher. The maps are scheduled to become effective in Fall 2008.

Federal and state recovery programs mandate the use of enhanced building codes and the most recent elevation guidance. These programs, most notably the Homeowner Assistance Program, also require that flood insurance be maintained in perpetuity. As a result of these requirements and heightened awareness, the number of NFIP policies has risen more than 150 percent after Katrina.

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Policies pre- and post-Katrina

	August 2005	August 2008
Hancock	5,347	9,843
Harrison	9,849	22,860
Jackson	5,673	20,396
Pearl River	580	1,118
Total	21,449	54,217

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

MEMA administers the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), which funds projects that lessen the effects of natural disasters. Among the types of HMGP projects are elevations, storm drainage improvements, constructing and improving storm shelters, and wind retrofits, where public buildings, such as city halls, fire stations, police stations, libraries, are made less susceptible to damage from high winds.

The program also includes statewide initiatives, such as generators for critical facilities, siren alert systems and the tornado safe room program.

Two schools in Harrison County received more than \$20 million to build state-of-the-art storm shelters on campus. Capable of housing 5,000 residents, the shelters will provide near absolute protection against a tornado, hurricane or other severe weather event. The schools will be constructed to withstand 200 mph wind gusts and debris impact. Other communities are examining Harrison County's example to discover new ways to shelter students and local residents.

The state has sought to use HMGP funds for its interoperable communications system, which will enable quicker and more streamlined emergency services. FEMA has so far failed to approve the use of HMGP for interoperable communications, but the state continues to press this issue.

Under a federal formula, Mississippi has been allocated \$413 million for the program, and state and local governments must contribute a 25 percent match for each project. In May 2008, Governor Barbour announced that local governments would only be responsible for five percent, instead of the normal 25 percent. The state will assume the remaining 20 percent.

The Governor's Office, the Department of Finance and Administration, and MEMA are working with FEMA on the state's global match initiative, which will provide credits for the 20 percent state match requirement. If successful, the global match initiative will save the state more than \$100 million.

Environmental Restoration and Hurricane Mitigation

While the built environment can be made more resistant to storms, the natural environment also can be enhanced to lessen the harmful impacts of hurricanes. Restoring the barrier islands to higher elevations and revitalizing their forestry and vegetation, along with restoring coastal marshlands and beaches, will reduce hurricane storm surge and wind speeds.

The barrier islands serve as the state's first line of defense against oncoming storms. As a hurricane approaches, the islands' forests help block and slow down hurricane winds. Barrier islands are also wetlands, which protect against flooding by blocking, absorbing, and slowing waves and storm surge. The marshlands and wetlands along the coastline serve as natural buffers in a similar manner.

In December 2005, Congress directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to develop recommendations for long-term environmental restoration and hurricane mitigation measures. The Corps has identified \$1 billion in restoration projects.

The federal government has provided Louisiana with more than \$12 billion for levee construction and other hurricane protection measures; likewise, Congress should protect Mississippi as well by funding projects in the Corps report.

CONCLUSION

Because the state continues to improve its responses to emergencies as well as its disaster preparation measures, Mississippi is better prepared for the threat of hurricanes and other natural disasters than it has ever been. The state has improved its capabilities in responding for the next storm. New homes, businesses, public buildings, and schools are being constructed stronger and safer from flood dangers. But the most encouraging aspect of storm preparedness is found among private citizens. Now, more than twice as many NFIP policies are in place than before Katrina, thus enabling residents to better protect their losses from flood damage.

Mississippi residents and officials have taken an aggressive approach to ensuring the damages sustained during Hurricane Katrina will never happen again. However, until funding is provided for interoperable communications and environmental restoration, Mississippi will be unable to fully safeguard its coastline from the threat of future natural disasters.

NONPROFITS

Mississippi enjoys the reputation as one of the most generous states, with our citizens consistently giving more to charity than any other state per capita; certainly, the actions of Mississippians after Hurricane Katrina have only reinforced this image. But following the storm, it was clear that Mississippi owed an extreme debt of gratitude to citizens not only from our neighboring states, but from across the country and world. Without the millions of labor hours and thousands of homes rebuilt and repaired by these selfless groups and individuals, Mississippi's recovery would not be possible.

The voluntary and nonprofit sectors have formed powerful partnerships post-Katrina and have delivered meals, built or rehabilitated houses, mentored and tutored children, and worked tirelessly to rebuild lives and communities.

Immediately after Katrina, Governor Barbour tasked the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) with creating a Hurricane Recovery Hotline to assist callers seeking food, clothing, and shelter as well as to handle donations of goods and funds. At its peak, the 41 phone lines were manned seven days a week using volunteers



Children volunteering

*Photo Courtesy of
the Sun Herald*

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and national service members, particularly AmeriCorps*NCCC members who rotated through the call center every few weeks. A donations center and a multi-agency staging center handled the tangible goods donations and the Governor's Recovery Fund handled the flow of cash donations.

Katrina's impact on the nonprofit and volunteer sectors was substantial. According to a survey by the Mississippi Center for Nonprofits, 67 percent of Gulf Coast nonprofits lost paid or volunteer staff, 77 percent lost operational assets, 33 percent lost all offices and equipment, 77 percent sustained major building damage, and 93 percent lost programs and services.

FOCUS ON HOUSING NEEDS

Mississippi's nonprofit and volunteerism sectors remain strong despite these obstacles. The portfolio of the MCVS contains 16 programs, of which seven (about 45 percent) are related to Katrina recovery or housing activities. Many other national service programs are also serving in Mississippi, and are overseen by other partners, including AmeriCorps*NCCC teams and Boat People SOS.

In June and July 2008, the MCVS informally surveyed its network of volunteer centers, VOAD partners, Long Term Recovery Committees, and other agencies working in housing and other human service capacities. The 35 responses (75 percent of the sample responded) indicated that nonprofit, volunteer-driven agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief, and Camp Coastal Outpost have built more than 2,600 homes and rehabilitated over 25,000 homes. While encouraging statistics, these numbers do not represent the total work that has been accomplished through volunteer organizations.

LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the many challenges and obstacles created by Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi's nonprofit and volunteer sectors continue to make headway. In the three years since Katrina, more than 700,000 volunteers have taken part in rebuilding Mississippi, including many people from out-of-state who came as a part of "voluntourism," defined as volunteering done more than 100 miles from home. Using a conservative estimate of just 10 hours per volunteer (and many people gave weeks or even months), over 7 million hours have been contributed in the last three years. Using Independent Sector's 2007 value of a volunteer hour of \$19.51 per hour, volunteers have given Mississippi nonprofits a value of \$136.6 million.



Mississippi Cottages

Long Term Recovery Committees (LTRCs) have been created in each coastal county to respond to Katrina recovery needs. These groups work hands-on with disaster victims to help them develop recovery plans. The state has directed funding to LTRCs for case management and housing repairs and rebuilding.

Mississippi's national service portfolio is 16 agencies strong, and in addition to the housing agencies described above, AmeriCorps members will also spend a year teaching students through the America Reads – Mississippi program, tutoring children after school at Boys and Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast, advancing the skills of persons with disabilities with Living Independence For Everyone (LIFE), connecting college students with opportunities for civic engagement through Campus Link, and more.

The Mississippi Center for Nonprofits participated in the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) committee of the Governor's Commission for Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal. Working in partnership with the United Way of South Mississippi, the Center and over 100 faith and community-based organizations have been meeting to develop plans to implement the recommendations in the Commission's report.

The Center for Nonprofits is working to rebuild the state's nonprofit sector. Activities include meetings of the South Mississippi Alliance of Service Organizations (SMASO); an information infrastructure and clearinghouse for nonprofits called Operation RISE; free and reduced memberships in the Mississippi Center for Nonprofits; workshops and trainings, including a joint conference with the MCVS created specifically for nonprofits and volunteers; the creation of a Center for Nonprofits satellite office on the Gulf Coast; and the Gulf Coast Leadership Institute.

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Other positive news is the allocation of funds by Congress for the creation of an AmeriCorps*NCCC campus in Mississippi, due to open in 2009. This campus will be ideally located to deploy corps of 18-24 year old members in three- to four-week “spikes” to natural disaster sites in the Gulf Coast and southeastern United States. Between spikes, members will be available to nonprofits in Mississippi at virtually no cost for projects ranging from building houses and environmental cleanups to beginning a mentoring program in a low-performing school.

Governor Barbour and the State of Mississippi are sincerely grateful for those groups which have assisted Mississippi through one of her most trying hours.

HOUSING

Governor Barbour’s unwavering commitment to housing is directly related to his vision of a Gulf Coast bigger and better than ever. Only by enhancing housing opportunities for all coastal residents, including low and moderate income homeowners and renters, will the workforce and economic engines of the Gulf Coast reach their full potential. In fact, the focus on providing housing assistance is evidenced by the more than \$3.9 billion of the \$5.4 billion - or about 71 percent - in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding directed by Governor Barbour for housing or housing-related programs.

The state is currently implementing programs that will not only fully restore lost housing stock, but also will produce more affordable housing units than existed prior to the storm. The programs will not only replace housing, but will rebuild homes that are better, stronger, safer, and, most importantly, more affordable for coastal residents. When current programs are completed, more affordable housing will be available for both homeowners and renters than existed before Katrina.

According to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) damage reports, 52,512 housing units in the three Coast counties received major or severe damage from Hurricane Katrina.

HOUSING DAMAGE, MAJOR OR SEVERE

	3 Counties	Hancock	Harrison	Jackson
Homeowner	33,299	8,273	13,032	11,994
Apartments	6,986	573	4,921	1,492
Small Rental	12,227	2,940	6,477	2,810
Housing Damage, Major or Severe	52,512	11,786	24,430	16,296

TEMPORARY HOUSING

The tremendous housing destruction left more than 100,000 Mississippians homeless. Homes, apartments, and hotels were demolished across the entire span of the Gulf Coast, leaving no housing, either permanent or temporary, to accommodate disaster victims. Furthermore, the massive amount of debris would only lengthen the time for housing accommodations to be made available, as the landscape would need to be cleared and cleaned before repairs and reconstruction could begin.

Before Katrina, FEMA had never deployed temporary housing as quickly or on such a large scale. Over 45,000 families have occupied FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes at some point since Katrina, and peak occupancy was 38,000 units in January 2006.

On August 21, 2008, 2,821 units remained in Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties. Another 540 units are in Pearl River County and 972 units are scattered through South Mississippi, bringing the total number of active units to 4,333.

FEMA’s temporary housing program will end on March 1, 2009, and all units will be moved out by that point.

FEMA TEMPORARY HOUSING



MISSISSIPPI ALTERNATIVE HOUSING PROGRAM

Given the severe destruction throughout the Gulf Coast, Governor Barbour immediately recognized that travel trailers would not provide suitable accommodations for the length of time needed to restore sufficient housing stock. These units can be transported and installed quickly, but offer unacceptable living conditions and are meant to be lived in for weeks, not years.

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In 2006, the Governor lobbied Congress for an alternative housing program to replace travel trailers with cottage units designed through the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal. Through a competitive process to award \$400 million between five coastal states, Mississippi won \$281 million for the Mississippi Alternative Housing Program, a two-year pilot program to construct and install better housing for those living in FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes.

Two alternative housing designs were produced, the Park Model and the Mississippi Cottage. The Park Model is a one bedroom unit and the Mississippi Cottage comes in two and three bedroom models. Both units have a Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard model for the handicapped and those with special needs. A third design, the Green Mobile, is currently under development.

The alternative units were designed to be safer, more durable, more comfortable, and more aesthetically pleasing than FEMA temporary housing. All units offer a front porch and larger bathroom and living areas, and were designed to reflect traditional Gulf Coast architecture. Built to the highest standards of the International Residential Code and HUD Code, these units have a dual certification that allow them to be set anywhere in the country and moved from place to place.

By August 2008, 2,800 units had been occupied and installed in Hancock, Harrison, Jackson and Pearl River counties. An additional 200 units will be donated to nonprofits to provide affordable housing for their constituents.

The pilot program will expire in March 2009, and the state is pursuing options to install the modular units permanently once the temporary program is complete. Permanent placement of cottage units represents a great affordable housing opportunity for local communities. At the time of this report, all of Pearl River County and the unincorporated areas of Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties had given permission for the cottages to remain as permanent housing, and other jurisdictions were exploring the issue.

PERMANENT HOUSING

Working with our federal partners, local governments and the private sector, the state is pursuing a comprehensive approach using CDBG and other resources to rebuild homes on the Gulf Coast.

Insurance proceeds have been the largest financial resource for rebuilding. The Mississippi Insurance Department reported that nearly 500,000 Katrina-related claims had been paid statewide, representing \$11.9 billion paid. In the three lower counties, the total was 235,000 claims and \$8.3 billion paid. This includes more than \$2.4 billion in flood damage claims to approximately 17,000 policyholders under the National Flood Insurance Program.

For rebuilding needs not met by insurance, the state has designed innovative, first-of-their-kind programs utilizing CDBG and GO Zone incentives. Nearly all of these programs have focused on the development of affordable housing for low and moderate income families.

When all of these programs have been implemented, the state will not only have replaced lost housing stock, but will have created more affordable housing in South Mississippi than existed before Katrina.

DIRECT HOUSING PROGRAMS

Lower Six Counties

Program	Dollars	Units Low	Units High
Homeowner Assistance Program (CDBG)	\$ 2,054,500,000	25,000	30,000
Long Term Workforce (CDBG)	350,000,000	11,000	12,850
Small Rental (CDBG)	262,000,000	6,500	7,500
Public Housing (CDBG)	105,000,000	2,000	2,000
Low Income Housing Tax Credits (GO Zone)	69,316,637	5,823	5,823
USDA Loans and Grants	45,400,000	822	822
Mortgage Revenue Bond Program (GO Zone)	45,000,000	1,255	1,255
Total Direct Housing	\$ 2,931,216,637	52,400	60,250

Major and Severe Damaged Units **52,512**
(Lower Three Counties)

HOMEOWNER

By HUD damage estimates, 33,299 homeowner units received severe or major damage in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties. Approximately 69 percent of all homes on the Coast were homeowner units before Katrina.

Homeowner, Major or Severe	3 Counties	Hancock	Harrison	Jackson
Flood damage, inside flood plain	9,346	3,215	3,249	2,882
Flood damage, outside flood plain	16,651	3,852	5,358	7,441
Wind damage	7,302	1,206	4,425	1,671
Homeowner, Major or Severe	33,299	8,273	13,032	11,994

Homeowners Assistance Program – Phase I

This program was created to assist homeowners who made responsible insurance decisions, yet still suffered uncompensated housing losses. When Katrina's storm surge pushed beyond federally-drawn flood boundaries, many homes not covered by flood insurance suffered extensive flood damage. These homeowners relied to their detriment on federal government policy that their homes did not need NFIP coverage.

Phase I included the following eligibility guidelines:

- Home must have received flood surge damage
- Home must be located in Hancock, Harrison, Jackson or Pearl River counties
- Home must be located outside the 100-year flood plain
- Applicant must have owned and occupied home as primary residence
- Applicant must have maintained homeowners insurance on home

Eligible applicants receive grants up to \$150,000. To mitigate future risk to these homes, homeowners are required to rebuild in accordance with FEMA elevations and maintain NFIP coverage on the home in perpetuity.

Homeowners Assistance Program – Phase II

This program is very similar to Phase I, but is targeted to low and moderate income families. Eligibility is limited to those with incomes at or



Ribbon cutting on new home at Keelser Air Force Base

Photo courtesy of the Sun Herald

below 120 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). Phase II differs from the first phase in two other major respects: applicants were not required to have maintained homeowners insurance and homes could be located inside or outside the floodplain. Eligible applicants receive grants up to \$100,000.

In March 2008, the HUD Office of Inspector General praised the state's administration of the program, saying that Mississippi had implemented sound controls in determining eligibility and avoiding benefit duplications.

Applications are still being processed for both phases of the Homeowner Assistance Program. Final grant disbursements should be complete by the end of the year.

HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

August 18, 2008

	Grants Approved	Grants Paid	Dollars Paid
Phase I	19,376	17,689	\$ 1,324,000,000
Phase II	6,709	4,925	\$ 344,043,570
Total	26,085	22,614	\$ 1,668,043,570

Elevation Grant

Eligible applicants under the Homeowner Assistance Program are also eligible for an elevation grant of up to \$30,000 to help defray the added costs of elevating their homes in accordance with FEMA standards.

THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Long Term Workforce

The Long Term Workforce Housing Program is designed to incentivize the development of affordable workforce housing, defined as housing available to households between 80 percent and 120 percent AMI. This program will not only provide housing for more than 10,000 low and moderate income families, but will create affordable housing on the Coast that will serve future generations.

HUD 2008 HOUSEHOLD INCOME LIMITS

	80% AMI		120% AMI	
	Harrison/ Hancock	Jackson	Harrison/ Hancock	Jackson
1 person	\$27,450	\$30,050	\$41,175	\$45,075
2 person	31,350	34,300	47,025	51,450
3 person	35,300	38,600	52,950	57,900
4 person	39,200	42,900	58,800	64,350

Under this program, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), administrator of the CDBG funds, solicits proposals for housing developments or programs. Homeowner or rental developments are eligible. For-profit developers and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply, and applicants are expected to leverage other sources of funding for their projects. MDA awards funding to proposals that best meet its criteria.

In February 2008, MDA awarded \$150 million for 16 projects, including:

- \$40 million for REACH, an employer-assisted homebuyer assistance program
- \$27 million to local nonprofits to repair and rehabilitate housing
- \$20 million for rehabilitation of foreclosed homes
- \$63 million for development of affordable, mixed-income housing

In June 2008, HUD approved the initial \$150 million in projects plus an additional \$200 million in CDBG for the program, and the first round of projects, representing 5,850 affordable units, are moving forward.

At the time of this report, MDA is reviewing a second round of applications, which will award another \$100 million. Subsequent rounds will be conducted to award any remaining funds.

Mortgage Review Bonds

The Mississippi Home Corporation offered the Mortgage Revenue Bond Program before Katrina to provide low-interest mortgages to first-time homebuyers and assistance with closing costs equal to three percent of the mortgage amount. The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act made this program even more appealing in hurricane-affected areas by waiving the first-time buyer requirement and placing higher limits on buyer's income and the purchase price of the home.

Under this increased flexibility, 1,255 Gulf Coast families have received the low-interest mortgages.

Historic Preservation

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) is administering the Mississippi Hurricane Relief Grant Program for Historic Preservation, a \$26 million program funded through the National Park Service for the rehabilitation of historic buildings damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Of 566 applicants, 325 projects were subsequently awarded grants by the MDAH Board of Trustees.

Although the grant program is funding repair to a number of historically significant public, institutional, and commercial buildings, the program's primary focus is owner-occupied residences. A portion of the funding to restore Beauvoir came through these grants. More than 75% of the projects are private homes, and the grant recipients reflect the spectrum of South Mississippi's cultural diversity. All grant recipients are required to execute a preservation easement, in order to protect the public investment in these historic properties and to help allocate scarce financial resources to citizens most serious about historic preservation.



*Historic Preservation Home
Photo courtesy of the Sun Herald*

THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Despite obstacles such as a scarcity of qualified architects, engineers, and builders, the Mississippi Hurricane Relief Grant Program has completed 71 rehab projects and expended well over \$6.5 million, thus far. Many more construction projects are well underway.

APARTMENTS

By HUD estimates, 6,986 apartment units, defined as a rental housing unit in a structure of ten units or more, received severe or major damage in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties.

Apartments, Major or Severe	3 Counties	Hancock	Harrison	Jackson
Flood damage, inside flood plain	1,843	20	1,528	295
Flood damage, outside flood plain	3,295	489	1,838	968
Wind damage	1,848	64	1,555	229
Apartments, Major or Severe	6,986	573	4,921	1,492

The 2004 Gulf Coast Apartment Survey indicated that the Coast had 24,681 apartment units in service before Katrina. According to the 2008 Gulf Coast Apartment Survey, 21,047 apartment units, representing 85 percent of the pre-storm apartment stock, are back online. In this survey, "apartments" are defined as a rental housing unit in a property of eight units or more.

However, a significant number of apartments are planned or are under construction, many of which have received financial assistance from the state. Based on information from building permits and projections from Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects and MDA's Public Housing program, an estimated 25,815 apartment units will be online by 2011, representing 105 percent of the pre-storm apartment stock.

	August 2004	April 2008	% of Pre-Storm	Estimated 2011	% of Pre-Storm
Hancock	1,210	705	58.3%	1,741	143.9%
Harrison	16,369	13,585	83.0%	16,565	101.2%
Jackson	7,102	6,757	95.1%	7,509	105.7%
3 Counties	24,681	21,047	85.3%	25,815	104.6%

While 85 percent of apartment stock is back online, the current stock of deeply affordable apartments, units affordable to extremely low-income households (below 30 percent AMI), is not as recovered. This stock is only 58 percent of pre-storm levels because the damage to these units was more widespread and the approval process for the high subsidies is more complicated. However, it is estimated that when all funded projects are completed, the deeply affordable apartment stock will be 93 percent of the pre-storm level. The seven percent gap between projected units and the pre-storm stock represents about 400 units. The state is using existing programs to bridge the gap.

LIHTC

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) provide federal income tax incentives for the development of high-quality apartments affordable to households with modest incomes. Households eligible to occupy LIHTC apartments have incomes at or below 60 percent AMI. A two-bedroom LIHTC apartment in the lower three counties will have a monthly rent of \$650 or less, which is generally below market rental rates.

The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act authorizes the Mississippi Home Corporation (MHC) to allocate approximately \$35 million LIHTC annually in 2006, 2007 and 2008. At Governor Barbour's request, MHC targeted most of the credits to the lower six counties and encouraged mixed income developments.

As a result of tightening credit markets, the pricing of tax credits has changed, and some LIHTC projects are under-funded. Recognizing this effect on affordable housing, Governor Barbour has budgeting CDBG funds to cover project gaps, which will enable these projects to move forward.

When current projects are completed, more LIHTC units will be on the Coast than were in service before Katrina. In the three coastal counties, LIHTC awards will support the development of 3,996 apartment units in the lower three counties, and 5,823 units in the lower six counties.

	Units Awarded	Completed to Date	Completion Later in 2008	Completed in 2009	Completion After 2009
Hancock	848	0	96	716	36
Harrison	2,289	95	509	1,397	288
Jackson	859	128	57	674	0
3 Counties	3,996	223	662	2,787	324

THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Public Housing

This CDBG-funded program is providing \$105 million to the five coastal public housing authorities to rebuild public housing.

Katrina destroyed 800 of 2,361 public housing units in the three lower counties. Approximately 3,000 new units will be constructed leveraging program funds, LIHTC and equity raised by public housing authorities. Public Housing program funds alone will account for construction of 2,000 units. When these units come online, approximately 4,500 public housing units will be available, nearly twice the pre-storm total. These units are available to low and very-low income residents.

Construction has been completed on 272 units and an additional 642 units will be complete by the end of 2008.

SMALL RENTAL

By HUD damage estimates, 12,227 small rental units received severe or major damage in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties. In HUD damage estimates, “small rental” is defined as a rental housing unit in a structure of ten units or less. Due to differing definitions, some units considered back in service by the Gulf Coast Apartment Survey may be considered “small rental” by HUD.

Small Rental, Major or Severe	3 Counties	Hancock	Harrison	Jackson
Flood damage inside flood plain	3,312	1,178	1,380	754
Flood damage, outside flood plain	6,483	1,473	3,364	1,646
Wind damage	2,432	289	1,733	410
Small Rental, Major or Severe	12,227	2,940	6,477	2,810

Small Rental Assistance Program

Funded through \$262 million of CDBG, this forgivable loan program will fund development of small rental properties in Hancock, Harrison, Jackson and Pearl River counties. Applicants are required to meet program terms for a period of five years. Terms include maintaining low and moderate income rental rates, which are affordable to tenants below 120 percent AMI.

The first round of funding has been awarded for construction of 2,200 units. In August 2008, nearly 250 units were either about to begin or under construction.

The complicated HUD environmental review process has caused serious delays in getting these units online. Up to 11 different environmental reviews are required for each site, and the process is very time consuming. Local bureaucratic approval processes and local opposition to these projects have also restricted the construction of small rental and LIHTC projects.

An estimated 6,500 to 7,500 small rental units will be constructed through the program.

CONCLUSION

The state is committed to a recovery approach that addresses the critical housing needs of its citizens. At this point in the recovery process, the state has worked to fulfill the temporary housing needs of its citizens, while developing solutions for the long term problems facing storm-wrecked communities. The state now finds itself fully in the implementation phase of housing recovery.

Governor Barbour has set aggressive goals for all our CDBG housing programs. And while the work to recover, rebuild, and renew will continue for years, the state hopes to quickly complete implementation of all its housing programs.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and utilities, is vital to ensuring localities can function properly. However, after Hurricane Katrina struck South Mississippi and the Gulf Coast a grievous blow, nearly all public infrastructure along our coastline was taken out of service. The state and federal government immediately took action, working quickly to restore vital services to the citizens. Because of these efforts, basic infrastructure has returned online, serving coastal residents at the same or improved capacity levels. Also, the two major bridges—the Biloxi Bay Bridge and the Bay St. Louis Bridge—connecting the coast were reopened in 2007. Now the emphasis focuses on less urgent projects – new city halls, fire stations, courthouses – and water/sewer infrastructure to support growing housing development.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Public Assistance

The FEMA Public Assistance Program provides reimbursement for the repair, restoration, reconstruction or replacement of damaged public facilities and infrastructure after a disaster. FEMA has obligated \$1.1 billion for emergency work and \$1.6 billion for permanent work under the program.

Public Assistance Program

Emergency Work

- Debris removal
- Emergency protective measures

Permanent Work

- Non-federal roads and bridges
- Water control facilities
- Public buildings
- Public utilities
- Parks, recreational and other

Local governments set priorities for the sequence of permanent work. Most often, schools, water/sewer facilities, roads, and recreational facilities have taken precedence over public buildings in the order of construction.

Roughly a third of permanent work has been completed.

Community Revitalization

Although it funds a variety of public infrastructure improvements, the Community Revitalization Program focuses primarily on building enhanced public facilities. Of the \$300 million in CDBG funds allocated to the program, \$225 million is targeted to the lower six counties and \$75 million is targeted to remaining GO Zone counties.

Local governments developed projects for a broad range of uses including reconstruction and rehabilitation of city halls, fire stations, civic centers, libraries, parks, and streetscape improvements. GO Zone projects included the same broad range of uses and included drainage improvements, restoration of public buildings, and repairs to water and wastewater treatment facilities.

All funds allocated to the six lower counties have been awarded. For the GO Zone allocation, MDA has awarded \$41 million to 39 counties and municipalities. At the time of this report, ten GO Zone municipalities/counties have completed the environmental process and have been issued construction contracts. In the lower six counties, three projects are under construction, and most of the local governments are in the process of completing their environmental reviews and will soon receive construction contracts.

Ground Zero

Hancock County bore the brunt of Hurricane Katrina, as the eye crossed its western side, and the storm's most destructive winds and storm surge pounded the county. Recognizing the tremendous damage and extraordinary needs in this area, Governor Barbour created the Ground Zero Program.

Funded through CDBG, this program will direct \$200 million for public infrastructure, community revitalization and economic development in Hancock County, "ground zero" for the destructive force of Katrina. A variety of projects are eligible under the program, including water and sewer facilities, fire protection facilities, public buildings and flood and drainage improvements.

The process for allocating program funds began in early August, when local governments submitted proposals for their priority projects. MDA has reviewed and analyzed the proposals, and has invited more detailed applications for selected projects. These funds and the projects they support are expected to have a significant, positive impact on the continued recovery of Hancock County.

TRANSPORTATION

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) continues to make great strides in rebuilding damaged and destroyed transportation infrastructure. The state was allocated \$1.033 billion by the Federal Highway Administration and \$20 million by FEMA to pay for the recovery of roads and bridges. MDOT has expended \$945 million in repairs and reconstruction, and expects to spend remaining funds in fiscal year 2009.

A portion of the federal funds was also distributed to local cities to make repairs to city streets, county roads, restore signage, and to perform other necessary improvements.

Bridges

MDOT's greatest milestone since Hurricane Katrina has been the opening of the Bay St. Louis Bridge and the Biloxi Bay Bridge. Both bridges are fully operational and open to traffic.

- Bay St. Louis Bridge – Links Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian, and Hancock and Harrison counties. Opened first two lanes in May 2007 and four lanes in January 2008.
- Biloxi Bay Bridge – Links Biloxi and Ocean Springs, and Harrison and Jackson counties. Opened first two lanes in November 2007 and four lanes in April 2008.

THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Highway 90

Work on a series of U.S. Highway 90 projects from St. Louis Bay to Biloxi Bay is proceeding at a record pace. Improvements will include replacement of curbs, repairs to the drainage systems and sidewalks, resurfacing, and the installation of state-of-the-art synchronized traffic signals.

Replacement of curbs, repairs to the drainage systems and foundation work for new traffic signals are well underway. Work to pave and install sidewalks will follow curb work. The projects are scheduled to be completed in December 2008.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Gulf Coast Regional Water and Wastewater Program

This \$641 million program, funded through CDBG, will install reliable water, sewer, and storm water infrastructure in the southernmost five counties. Two specific goals of the program are: 1) to provide infrastructure to satisfy demands placed on existing infrastructure by population shifts and to accommodate future growth, and 2) to move toward and implement a regional infrastructure system – a necessity to promote the maximum utilization of resources and efficiency of services.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) developed a master plan for the program, which was approved by HUD in April 2007. By August 2007, MDEQ had made grant awards for 68 projects to the five County Utility Authorities located in Pearl River, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson and Stone counties and the cities of Gautier, Ocean Springs, Pascagoula, and Moss Point. The County Utility Authorities, which were created by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region Utility Act in April 2006, have adopted rules and regulations as required by the Act and are responsible for the implementation of these projects with the exception of those grants made to the referenced cities.

The Poplarville Water Supply project has been completed and another, the Moss Point Reverse Osmosis water project, should be completed in August 2008. Remaining projects are currently in the engineering/environmental/land acquisition phases and are projected to begin advertisement for construction bids by the fourth quarter of 2008.

The program is not moving at an adequate pace. The state has faced difficulty navigating complex federal environmental regulations, and local political issues and opposition from local groups have slowed program progress.

MDEQ expects 2009 to be the year of construction. Most projects are anticipated to begin construction by early 2009; all projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2010. Approximately 600 miles of pipe along with 34 water wells, 34 water storage tanks and 17 wastewater treatment facilities will be built under this infrastructure program.

Facility Status

Treatment of municipal wastewater is a vital element in reconstruction and in protection of the environment. MDEQ continues to work with coastal communities to repair and upgrade their wastewater treatment facilities. Various utility repair/replacement projects along the Coast are in different phases of construction.

CONCLUSION

Much progress has been made in restoring public infrastructure. Vital infrastructure – roads, bridges, water/sewer – is back online. The reopening of the bridges connecting the coastal counties has not only restored confidence to coastal residents, but has also provided an important economic link for the entire Gulf Coast. Plans for regional water and wastewater have moved forward too slowly, and the state is working to speed up these projects.

Despite the enormous amount of progress made, complete restoration of public infrastructure, particularly the restoration of all public buildings on the Coast, is a sizeable challenge that will take many years to complete.



Photo courtesy of the Sun Herald

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As the private sector leads the economic recovery of the Coast, state efforts have focused on creating more and better jobs by offering financial incentives to retain existing businesses and attract new ones. The employment outlook is strong; unemployment remains low and new job opportunities will continue to be generated over the next few years.

While the government is helping restart the Coast economy, the efforts of the private sector will carry the burden of the long-term vitality of the region.

Sales tax revenues, boosted by construction activity, have never been stronger for many cities along the Coast.

SALES TAX DIVERSIONS TO CITIES

		% Change from FY 2005			
	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	
Waveland	\$ 2,239,566	-30.3%	30.2%	29.5%	
Bay St. Louis	1,357,007	-25.7%	-4.3%	-0.3%	
Pass Christian	1,258,676	-52.5%	-50.3%	-70.2%	
Long Beach	1,484,483	4.0%	9.7%	10.7%	
Gulfport	18,021,641	39.5%	37.7%	24.0%	
Biloxi	12,711,465	-21.0%	-13.1%	-11.0%	
D'Iberville	3,525,279	46.0%	41.9%	31.3%	
Ocean Springs	3,750,471	31.8%	39.2%	29.5%	
Gautier	2,089,297	55.5%	45.3%	30.1%	
Pascagoula	5,421,320	35.2%	26.7%	23.4%	
Moss Point	1,416,692	17.6%	22.9%	27.3%	
Coast Total	\$ 53,275,897	16.8%	20.5%	13.8%	

CREATING MORE AND BETTER JOBS

Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport

In order to create better jobs and revitalize the local economy, the state requested CDBG funding soon after Katrina for restoration of the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport (MSPA). By facilitating repair and restoration of damaged maritime infrastructure, the \$600 million MSPA Restoration Program will re-establish the state's ship-ping industry.

Just as in other coastal states, Mississippi's ports are crucial compo-nents of economic recovery, because their operations support not only the coastal economy, but the financial vitality of the state and region. The MSPA was designed as a full service, deep-water port, with container, break-bulk and bulk cargo handling capabilities. Its strategic location on the Gulf of Mexico allows direct access to sea-lanes, air, rail and interstate highways.

Many products grown or manufactured in the state are exported through the MSPA. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi-produced poultry and forest products were two of the top three exports shipped through the Port. Furthermore, manufacturing companies located in Mississippi have traditionally relied upon the Port for imported products.

Hurricane Katrina had a crippling effect on the Port's infrastructure, equipment and facilities. The entire rail system was destroyed, as were waterfront warehouses, container storage areas, and freezer facilities. Seven of ten berths were rendered unusable, and five remain out of service.

Despite ongoing efforts to repair the berths and other port facilities, MSPA currently operates well below pre-storm capacity levels. Of 700,000 square feet of storage destroyed, only 400,000 square feet have been rebuilt.

Because the Port sustained substantial damage during the hurricane, imports and exports are down significantly. Import of forest products has ceased since Katrina. Frozen cargo exports have been shut off completely until freezer facilities are replaced. Some shippers and carriers have relocated their business, but have expressed desire to return when new infrastructure becomes available. Those tenants that remain are operating at higher costs, and may not be able to keep their activities at MSPA.

Reduced capacity has resulted in fewer job opportunities at MSPA. Before Katrina, the Port produced 2,000 direct maritime jobs; current-ly, there are only 1,200. Revenues are down significantly as well: maritime revenue was \$4.1 million in fiscal year 2007 compared to \$9.4 million in fiscal year 2005, and non-maritime revenue was \$3.9 million in fiscal year 2007, down from \$11.6 million in fiscal year 2005.

THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

The restoration program is important to recapturing a major portion of the region's job base and to filling a national need for more port capacity. West Coast ports are operating above their capacities while facing impending increased shipping traffic from the widening of the Panama Canal. Ports in the Gulf Coast and East Coast must increase their operations to handle the nation's imports and exports. Restoration will ensure the MSPA can service increased traffic resulting from improvements to the Panama and Suez canals. A viable port is crucial for handling of these cargoes.



Photo courtesy of the Sun Herald

The restoration program will not only fund the repair, rebuilding and replacement of port infrastructure, equipment and facilities, it will also help better prepare the port for future hurricanes.

During Hurricane Katrina, the storm surge lifted cargo containers inland, causing significant damage to port facilities as well as commercial and residential properties in Gulfport. The restoration program will incorporate mitigation strategies to ensure cargo containers are secure during storms and do not pose a threat to life or property outside the port's parameters.

These projects will increase capacity, which will in turn produce more jobs. Bringing more shipping activity into the port means more manpower needed to load, unload and process shipping cargo.

This increase in jobs will have a tremendously positive effect on the Coast economy. Port employment is unique because it is available to workers who may not have the benefit of a college education, while also paying higher wages than other jobs available to this workforce. Providing more and better jobs for the coastal workforce will help workers provide a better life for their families.

MDA has contracted with an internationally renowned port engineering and consulting firm, CH2M HILL, to review MSPA's restoration plan. The firm will provide professional input designed to better restore the port's competitive edge for the current global shipping market with a continued focus on the future.

Economic Development Program

The primary goal of the \$335 million Economic Development Grant and Loan Program is creating new jobs by funding public infrastructure improvements or eligible training activities to benefit private, for-profit businesses. All areas of the Gulf Opportunity Zone are eligible through this CDBG program. Grants and loans flow through the local unit of government and projects are funded on an as needed basis.

Most program projects are in the lower three counties. PSL-North America, located in Hancock County, received \$9 million in grant assistance for public improvements including water and sewer, rail improvements and an access road. Gulf Ship and Trinity Yachts, located in Harrison County, have collectively received \$21 million for publicly-owned boat launching mechanisms. In Jackson County, Northrop Grumman Ship Systems has been awarded over \$1.5 million to rehabilitate buildings located on Singing River Island. Additionally, the Gulf Coast Convention Center has been awarded over \$17 million to rehabilitate their facilities.

The program, along with GO Zone incentives, provides a stepping stone for private industry, so that it can lead the region's recovery. This program assists the private sector by recruiting new businesses and encouraging the expansion of existing businesses. Further, these projects aid in the creation of new jobs in the areas that were most affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Gulf Opportunity Zone

The Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005 provides economic development incentives within the 49 most damaged counties. Incentives include \$4.9 billion in tax-exempt private activity bonds, \$106 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and 50 percent bonus-depreciation for property placed in service before December 31, 2010. Discussion of Low Income Housing Tax Credits is included in the Housing section of this report.

GO Zone tax-exempt private activity bonds are encouraging economic recovery and growth in South Mississippi. Through these bonds, business owners and corporations can borrow capital at interest rates lower than would otherwise be available. For the GO Zone, Congress increased the allocation to \$4.9 billion for the five-year period from 2006 to 2010. By comparison, the normal amount allocated statewide during that time period would be approximately \$1.3 billion. Prohibitions against financing hotels and retail facilities were also lifted.

Some of the largest employers on the Coast, including Chevron, Northrop Grumman and PSL-North America, received recovery assistance through the increased bond allocation.

Recent legislation passed by Congress will eliminate construction start deadlines for the bonus depreciation deduction, requiring only that the property be placed in service before December 31, 2010.

EMPLOYMENT

After spiking to over 20 percent after the storm, unemployment levels returned to normal levels in Fall 2006. Since that time, unemployment rates in Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties have consistently ranked among the top ten counties statewide.

	Labor Force		Employed		Unemployment Rate	
	Jun-05	Jun-08	Jun-05	Jun-08	Jun-05	Jun-08
Hancock	20,920	19,610	19,490	18,300	6.8%	6.7%
Harrison	93,610	88,340	87,000	82,670	7.1%	6.4%
Jackson	63,280	62,580	58,660	58,220	7.1%	7.0%
Total	177,810	170,530	165,150	159,190	7.1%	6.6%

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) has continued to work with partner organizations in a concerted effort to increase employment along the Coast. In this endeavor, MDES has tailored programs to meet specific needs for job creation. The majority of these services are provided through the help of Workforce Investment Network Job Centers, partnerships and grants.

Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, MDES was awarded a \$95 million National Emergency Grant (NEG) from the federal government. To date, the grant has served 10,865 citizens, including 2,532 placed in temporary recovery jobs and 6,388 receiving training through community colleges and proprietary schools, as well as on-the-job training from Mississippi businesses.

After Katrina, the Arts Recovery Project, a unique partnership between MDES, the Twin Districts local workforce area, and the Mississippi Arts Commission, was formed to address the needs of the many coastal artists and craftsmen severely affected by Hurricane Katrina. As individual artisans who created and sold original works of art, they constituted small businesses; collectively, they represented a significant industry that served as a cornerstone to other economic sectors such as tourism.

Remaining NEG funds are now being targeted toward advanced manufacturing needs on the Gulf Coast, specifically in the ship-building industry.

TOURISM

Tourism has always been a central facet of the Coast's economy. In addition to the beaches, fishing, golf, casino resorts, and seafood cuisine, the area's relaxed atmosphere and unique culture has attracted visitors from all over the country.

Prior to the arrival of \$4 gasoline, the tourism industry showed signs of a strong comeback. Across the three coastal counties, hotel room inventory is 70 percent of pre-Katrina totals, with 12,393 rooms available compared to 17,544 before the storm. Casino revenues reached record heights in 2007, and the outlook for 2008 is dependent on fuel prices and other economic realities.

Hotel Rooms - Biloxi-Gulfport Metropolitan Statistical Area

	Room Inventory	Occupancy Rate	Rooms Occupied per Night
2004	15,853	60.1%	9,528
2005	6,477	87.7%	5,680
2006	9,175	75.2%	6,900
2007	11,371	66.8%	7,596
Jan-June 2008	12,017	70.1%	8,424

Gulf Coast Gross Gaming Revenues

2004	\$ 1,226,874,802
2005	886,158,029
2006	915,565,498
2007	1,300,103,966
Jan-June 2008	658,231,787

THREE YEARS AFTER KATRINA

The state is helping bring tourists back to the Coast. MDA created the \$5 million Tourism Industry Restoration Grant Program to fund extensive advertising and events marketing campaigns to attract travelers and to bolster the area's economy. Grants have been given to 27 tourism entities in the six southernmost counties plus Forrest County.

In addition to general marketing, the program has helped promote events such as Cruisin' the Coast, Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo, Smokin' the Sound, and the Coast Crawfish Festival. The Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art, Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum, Lynn Meadows Discovery Center, Walter Anderson Museum of Art, and Beauvoir have also benefited from these dollars.

The program's goal is to increase the number of visitors to the Gulf Coast in order to recover and sustain tourism-related businesses and jobs, while supplementing coastal communities' tax revenues.

CONCLUSION

While employment is strong, the economic impact of the state's economic development programs has not been fully realized. Restoration of the Port, along with CDBG and GO Zone incentives, will result in thousands of new jobs and will further the revitalization of the Gulf Coast economy.

While these programs provide starting points, ultimately the private sector is the key to the Coast's coming back bigger and better than ever. Jobs and development will be the driving forces behind a successful recovery.

For a more detailed economic outlook, please consult reports published by the Gulf Coast Business Council at www.msgcbc.org.

EDUCATION

K-12 EDUCATION

Educational Performance

Academic achievement continues to be a top priority, as demonstrated by the results each year on state assessments. Of the 118 schools in the six southern counties that were assigned a school performance classification under the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System in 2007:

- 48 were rated Level 5-Superior-Performing
- 32 were rated Level 4-Exemplary
- 38 were rated Level 3-Successful
- None were rated Level 2-Under-Performing or Level 1-Low-Performing
- Long Beach School District and Pass Christian School District had all Level 5-Superior-Performing Schools.

Facilities and Enrollment

Progress on schools and facilities continues. Many of the renovations and repairs that were being made to salvageable schools have been completed. Many groundbreaking ceremonies for new construction were held during the 2007-2008 school year and several new schools will open at or near the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

The Biloxi School District had two schools under water during the tidal surge, Nichols Elementary and Gorenflo Elementary. Both schools were actually new and had opened in August 2004. After renovations and repairs, both schools opened in December 2006.

While Biloxi's enrollment is still down about 1,200 students, or about 20 percent of their student population, they expect approximately 800 more students over the next year and a half as Keesler Air Force Base opens their new housing for military families.

K-12 ENROLLMENT - LOWER THREE COUNTIES

School District	Compared to 2004-2005			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Hancock County	4,254	94.1%	98.6%	99.9%
Bay St. Louis				
Waveland	2,331	59.9%	69.8%	71.2%
Harrison County	13,091	92.0%	97.0%	98.6%
Biloxi	6,174	72.5%	75.2%	78.1%
Gulfport	6,158	79.0%	87.7%	89.7%
Long Beach	3,295	84.5%	85.1%	82.9%
Pass Christian	1,976	68.8%	74.6%	74.8%
Jackson County	8,419	98.7%	102.9%	105.8%
Moss Point	3,826	88.4%	84.4%	82.2%
Ocean Springs	5,359	90.6%	94.3%	97.4%
Pascagoula	7,403	90.3%	94.0%	95.3%
Total	62,285	87.0%	91.1%	92.6%
Hancock	6,585	82.0%	88.4%	89.7%
Harrison	30,693	83.2%	88.0%	89.5%
Jackson	25,007	92.9%	95.6%	97.3%

The Gulfport School District held a groundbreaking ceremony in June 2008 for a new elementary school. The new school will replace 28th Street Elementary School, which was heavily damaged during Katrina.

A new high school is under construction in Harrison County, and will be open in Fall 2009. West Harrison High will also serve as a storm shelter and will be able to house 2,500 people when future storms approach the area.

The Hancock County School District will open two schools in Fall 2008 that will replace three schools that were destroyed by the storm. Charles B. Murphy Elementary and Gulfview Elementary will be combined into one school, South Hancock Elementary School, which will open in early September. West Hancock Elementary is scheduled to open at the end of September.

The Long Beach School District held a groundbreaking ceremony in May 2008 for a new school to replace H. McCaughan Elementary School. The new school will be built at an alternate location. The repairs to Long Beach's W.J. Quarles Elementary School are scheduled to be completed in August 2008.

During the 2007-08 school year, the Pascagoula School District reopened two elementary schools that were severely damaged. Beach Elementary in Pascagoula reopened its doors to students the first day of school on August 6, 2007. Since Katrina, these students had been housed at a neighboring school, Central Elementary.

In November 2007, Gautier Elementary was reopened for students and faculty. These students and teachers had been housed at College Park Elementary in Gautier since Hurricane Katrina. With the reopening of these two elementary schools, all 19 schools in the Pascagoula School District are in full operation. Floor replacement, ceiling replacement and door replacement is continuing.

Pass Christian held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new school in October 2007 and progress continues to be made on the new school, which will serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade when it opens in February 2009.

Staff Retention and Recruitment

In addition to rebuilding and restarting schools, federal funds are being utilized to attract and keep quality educators at Coast schools. The federal Hurricane Educator Assistance Program provides \$7 million to recruit, retain, and compensate new and current teachers and administrators who commit to work for at least three years in school-based positions in public elementary and secondary schools. Incentives include salary supplements, housing subsidies, signing bonuses, relocation costs and loan forgiveness. Most school districts are using these funds to retain teachers.

HIGHER EDUCATION

University of Southern Mississippi

The University of Southern Mississippi continues to have a vital presence on the Gulf Coast:

- The Gulf Coast Research Laboratory lost 59,000 square feet of office and research space. Since Katrina, 44,440 square feet has been replaced, mainly at the Cedar Point site. Funding has been secured for an additional 31,800 square feet of research and laboratory buildings.
- The Gulf Park Campus received damage to every building, representing a loss of about 270,000 square feet. Only 18,000 square feet of space was usable after Katrina. Currently, 139,000 square feet of classroom and office space has been repaired, and most campus infrastructure is back in service. The process of renovating the remaining damaged buildings on campus has begun and is expected to be completed in the next three years.

USM GULF PARK CAMPUS ENROLLMENT

2004-05	2,093
2005-06	1,784
2006-07	1,843
2007-08	1,916

- The Gulf Coast Library and Media Center reopened in January 2008. The library includes the Katrina Research Center, an interdisciplinary center and a public clearinghouse to facilitate the gathering of historical and current information on the natural, physical, social, political, economic and spiritual aspects of recovery from Hurricane Katrina and other disasters.

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- Several recovery projects will be completed this year at the Gulf Park Campus, including the College of Business Administration, campus security office, Toy Library and Technology Learning Center and the TLC Tennis Center.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

With campuses in Harrison, Jackson, Stone and George counties, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College was the largest community college in Mississippi before Katrina. In 2007, enrollment was 9,315 students, down from 10,500 in 2005, but an increase of nearly 1,500 from the previous year.

CONCLUSION

The quick rebound of coastal schools continues to be one of Mississippi's shining achievements of hurricane recovery. Going back to school just six weeks after the storm and excelling on test scores a few months afterwards, students and teachers refused to allow Katrina's destruction to hinder their education efforts. Now, three years since the storm, coastal students have moved from temporary to permanent classrooms; in addition, many pupils will soon have the opportunity to receive an enhanced educational experience in one of the Coast's new educational facilities.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The greatest resource for state government is its employees, and never has that been more evident than after Hurricane Katrina. The efforts of state employees in the days and weeks following Katrina – tirelessly searching for those in need to provide human services and economic assistance – will always be remembered as a shining moment for the state.

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) has been instrumental in restoring basic human services and helping to rebuild lives across Mississippi's Gulf Coast.

In June 2008, MDHS completed the refurbishment of the Harrison County Department of Human Services, which includes the Divisions of Child Support Enforcement, Economic Assistance and Family and Children's Services. MDHS employees had been conducting agency business in 15 county-owned FEMA trailers, since their offices were

destroyed by the storm. Currently, MDHS staff in Hancock and Pearl River Counties are continuing to operate from temporary facilities, but plans are underway to construct new facilities for these offices.

SSBG

The primary mechanism for advancing health recovery has been Social Services Block Grants (SSBG). The grants, totaling \$128 million, are aimed at health and mental health services, and the repair, renovation and reconstruction of health and mental health facilities. SSBG are also used for other areas of human services.

Besides repairing storm damages, SSBG are being used to restore care services, develop storm-proof infrastructures, hire and retain health care professionals, and improve information systems.

Governor Barbour set aside \$10 million in SSBG funding to help hospitals along the Gulf Coast recruit and retain health care professionals. This grant money was instrumental in helping hospitals keep experienced medical staff, as well as attracting qualified providers to meet the medical needs of the Gulf Coast.

Another major grant provided nearly \$8 million in SSBG funds to the Coastal Family Health Center to restore primary health care services along the Coast.

Children and Youth

Utilizing \$21 million of SSBG, the MDHS Office of Children and Youth played a major role in the restoration of age-appropriate playgrounds at child care facilities in 18 of Mississippi's hardest hit counties. Additionally, MDHS provided training and funding for educational materials, supplies and minor repairs to these facilities.

To date, MDHS has installed 204 age-appropriate playgrounds at licensed facilities and 128 playgrounds for In-Home providers. Educational materials and supplies were delivered to 138 licensed facilities and 151 In-Home providers. Additional replacement items were requested and distributed, including complete room replacement kits, kitchens and offices.

MDHS has also facilitated mental health training for nearly 200 teachers to help preschool children cope with mental health issues caused by trauma from Hurricane Katrina.



*Volunteers help KaBoom! build its 100th playground
Photo courtesy of the Sun Herald*

Senior Services

The MDHS Division of Aging and Adult Services has partnered with the Southern Mississippi Area Agency on Aging to restore, rebuild and repair senior center services on the Gulf Coast. These centers serve as congregate meal sites, adult day care sites and shelters during emergency situations. Partnerships have been established between county and city governments to ensure that projects can be sustained to provide local support for seniors. Five centers are still under construction; seven centers are open and serving 670 seniors.

MDHS has used SSBG and other funding to rebuild over 1,000 homes on the Coast for seniors, the disabled and low-income residents, and the agency has also provided services, repairs, or replacement of items such as septic tanks, water line repairs, furniture, appliances, bedding, debris removal, short-term rent, personal items, food, clothing, shelter, health and mental health care, medication and medical equipment.

CONCLUSION

Katrina both devastated the Coast's health and human services infrastructure and heightened the need for these services. Three years later, the facilities and staff are back in place, while health and human services demands have returned to normal levels. MDHS, after providing increased critical support after the storm, is continuing its vital mission of responding to and meeting health and human services needs.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND MARINE RESTORATION

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) have driven coastal restoration and environmental efforts for the state. Their efforts, including removing environmental hazards and rehabilitating marine habitats, are ongoing and continue to positively enhance, preserve, and restore the environment of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

COASTAL RESTORATION

Barrier Islands and Environmental Restoration

Hurricane Katrina exposed vulnerabilities of Mississippi and Louisiana to powerful storms, and highlighted the need for long-term protective measures. The federal government has allocated more than \$12 billion to Louisiana for rebuilding the levees around New Orleans and other flood protection measures. Likewise, federal funding will be needed for the restoration and conservation of Mississippi's ecological systems to protect the state's coastline from future hurricanes.

In November 2005, Governor Barbour presented the state's recovery plan to Congress. Congress funded all recovery requests except the environmental restoration projects needed to buffer hurricane impacts. Instead, Congress directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to develop a report identifying long-term coastal restoration and hurricane protection measures.

The Corps report identifies projects totaling \$1 billion. Suggested projects focus on restoring the barrier islands to higher elevations and revitalizing their forestry and vegetation, restoring coastal marshlands and beaches, and purchasing flood-prone areas from willing property owners for conversion to open space. These three elements will enhance the natural environment, which has been proven to slow storm surge and block powerful winds.

Restoring the barrier islands to their 1917 footprint will provide invaluable protection for the Coast. The barrier islands and coastal wetlands serve as the Coast's primary defense against ocean waves and surge caused by tropical storms and hurricanes. The barrier islands and wetlands protect against flooding by blocking, absorbing, and slowing waves and storm surge. Models indicate that as storms move across

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coastal wetlands, their surges are reduced by about one foot per every acre of wetland. Without the buffer of barrier islands, wave and ocean storm surge heights could reach eight to twelve feet higher on the shoreline. Wetland forestry also serves to block and slow down powerful hurricane winds.

Since the Corps has recommended appropriate long-term environmental restoration and hurricane mitigation projects, Congress should provide the funding needed for their implementation. Just as levees protect New Orleans from hurricane surge waters, the barrier islands and coastal wetlands guard Mississippi against the dangers of hurricanes. Even though funding for these hurricane mitigation measures represents less than one tenth of what Louisiana has already been granted for levee rebuilding and flood protection, completion of these projects will provide equally invaluable protection of life and property. Movement on these projects is needed immediately; delay raises the risk of another powerful storm reaching – and devastating – Mississippi's shoreline.

Corps Projects

Under a Congressional directive, the Corps and DMR worked together to prepare an interim report detailing what could be done in the near-term to restore and renew coastal Mississippi. In May 2007, Congress approved \$107 million to implement these interim projects, which include beach restoration, rebuilding and repairing seawalls, and constructing flood control measures. Work has begun on many of these projects, and all construction is expected to be underway by early 2009.



Debris removal

Beaches

The coastal counties have also made improvements to Mississippi's beaches. Beach re-nourishment, planting of vegetation, and improvements to infrastructure have benefited water quality. The counties contracted with the Corps to replace sand lost due to storm erosion. This work has required temporary closure of each segment as work progresses; however, the beaches and water quality have recovered quickly once the re-nourishment projects were completed.

DEBRIS REMOVAL

Dry Debris

Hurricane Katrina generated over 46 million cubic yards of storm debris across the state with approximately 24 million cubic yards in the three coastal counties. The amount of storm debris was twice as much as Hurricane Andrew, the previous record-holder for most debris, yet the debris was cleaned up in approximately the same amount of time. Almost all of this debris has now been removed, disposed or recycled. Consequently, much of MDEQ's recent debris-related work has focused on ensuring the proper closure and restoration of the more than 340 debris management sites utilized throughout the state.

MDEQ is continuing to coordinate with MEMA and local communities throughout the state to inspect the remaining unresolved sites used for disaster debris management after Katrina. MDEQ is also monitoring the 19 disaster debris disposal sites in the three coastal counties used for the management of the massive amount of structural and building debris created by the hurricane.

Marine Debris

DMR began working with the U.S. Coast Guard and FEMA in September 2005 to organize removal of marine debris beginning south of I-10 and extending out four miles into the Mississippi Sound. Marine debris removal was completed in June 2008.

The marine debris removed from the three coastal counties measured 389,935 cubic yards, which includes approximately 200 derelict or abandoned vessels. In addition to those vessels, the U.S. Coast Guard also removed 134 derelict vessels under their ESF-10 mission for Hurricane Katrina.

MARINE HABITATS

DMR has worked extensively to revitalize marine habitats. Several monitoring and cultivation programs are helping replenish stocks of fish, oysters, shrimp, crab and reef habitat.

The 2007 – 2008 Mississippi Oyster Season was open between September 2007 and May 2008. Since this was the first time major reefs in the western Mississippi Sound were opened to harvest post-Katrina, the Commission on Marine Resources allowed great flexibility on daily sack limits and season extensions. The season was more successful than initially expected, with a total of over 115,000 sacks of oysters harvested. Currently, the 2008 – 2009 Mississippi Oyster Season forecast appears strong.

CONCLUSION

After suffering much damage from Hurricane Katrina, the Coast's environmental and coastal systems have made a strong comeback and have been stabilized. The work of MDEQ and DMR, in cooperation with the federal government, has guided the renewal process. Their continued roles in monitoring and maintenance will ensure a healthy landscape for years to come.

However, because the coastline remains highly vulnerable to future storms, total recovery will not be complete until the barrier islands and coastal wetlands are restored.

CONCLUSION

Along with damaging winds and a raging storm surge that literally destroyed tens of thousands of homes, businesses, schools, and public structures, Hurricane Katrina effectively ushered in a new era in the story of Mississippi—one marked by recovery, renewal, and most importantly, by the resiliency of our people.

Three years later, we are witnessing the results of this era characterized by innovation, propelled by hard work, and realized by those instrumental to its success: the citizens of South Mississippi and the Gulf Coast. Today, we have reached numerous milestones, including the reopening of major thoroughfares and bridges, in addition to replacing vital public infrastructure and beginning construction on crucial housing projects. Under Governor Barbour's leadership, Mississippi's aggressive recovery efforts after the worst natural disaster in American history have been heralded as a national model for disaster recovery, and the tangible results of our progress continue to draw optimism, both from within our residents and observers.

Despite the amount of progress made over the past three years, much work remains to be completed in the recovery process that will last many years. However, with the most crucial recovery elements in place—strong, visionary leadership; stable recovery funding; and innovative policies—our state is uniquely equipped to not only meet our long-term recovery goals, but to far exceed anything we've ever imagined.

And with the support of our strong, resilient, self-reliant citizens, we will prevail. Just as they did on August 29, 2005, Mississippians continue to stand strong, poised for the creation of a Gulf Coast that is bigger and better than ever.



Photo courtesy of the Sun Herald

