



<http://www.linkedfate.org>

For Information about the Weekly Updates Contact Jason Reece at reece.35@osu.edu

Weekly Research Update

An examination of rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with an emphasis on displaced populations, inadequacy of government responses, and inequitable development strategies.

Weekly Update ~ 10.20.06

Recovery

- The water that rushed into New Orleans as storm levees burst open in August of 2005 not only left their mark on the streets of the city, but on and in the infrastructure below. The saltwater that inundated streets filled underground natural gas lines and posed an initial impediment to returning gas service to New Orleans residents. The lasting corrosive effects of the saltwater emersion are again threatening residential services. The worst case scenario described by Entergy states that if nothing is done 60% (844 miles) of the city's pipeline infrastructure could be inoperable in a matter of years. To begin repairs Entergy is proposing a multiplicity of options, all of which will need to be paid in part by costumer fees. Rates may increase up to 311%. Much of the discussion revolving around how, when, and at what price to fix the gas infrastructure is pitted against the same questions in relation to the city's electrical infrastructure. Both need attention and it remains to be seen how either will be remedied.

Source: Radtke Russell, Pam. "Flood residue crippling city's gas lines; Rebuilding system will mean rate hike." *The Times-Picayune*. October 17, 2006.

- In the immediate aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita many city codes and ordinances were lax and violations were routinely ignored because of the extraordinary circumstances. To date, some communities continue to ignore coding violations because life is not and lives are not "back to normal." In Biloxi, Mississippi codes were reinstated January 1, 2006. However, some city code enforces can attest that there are still many situations of violation out of necessity. Tent cities are still functioning, vacant homes still house those without homes and transient vegetation is taking hold from lot to lot. Vacancy rates and squatting have city administrators concerned for the safety of the inhabitants and neighboring residents.

Source: Lee, Anita. "Health and safety of city concern." *The Sun Herald*. October 16, 2006.

- So much to rebuild, but so few qualified workers to do the building. In Gulfport, Mississippi worker training programs are being implemented to help fill the gap between construction needs and available qualified workers. The program is funded both by government and private dollars. For all construction positions to be filled over 150,000 people will need to complete the training

program which includes free four week instructional courses. The courses are taught on subjects such as heating, air conditioning, electrics and other specified construction needs.

Source: The Associated Press. "Miss. coast job initiative: So much to build and not enough builders." *The Associate Press State and Local Wire*. October 17, 2006.

- The French Ministry of Culture has sent architects, chief engineers and money to New Orleans in hopes of rescuing and restoring architectural heritage sites. One of the first buildings to be restored will be the Passebon Cottage. The Creole cottage is owned by the New Orleans African American Museum. Stabilization of the building has begun with renovation to follow. Some look at the remains of the building and wonder how any of it survived the storm at all, while others can't comprehend why a wrecking ball has not finished the job. Although the city of New Orleans has not focused on reclaiming heritage sites the French government is ready to offer assistance and guidance until they do.

Source: Elie, Lolis. "French see treasure; we see trash." *The Times-Picayune*. October 18, 2006.

- Louisiana casinos brought in \$209.1 million in the month of September. The final total of revenue for the casinos includes river boats which have opened since Hurricane Katrina wiped out the industry along the Gulf Coast over one year ago. The months' profits can not be compared with the previous year, but some see the economic stimulus as good news for the Gulf Coast. The total does not include revenue at American Indian reservation casinos. American Indian nations are not required to publicly declare earnings.

Source: Associated Press, "La. Casinos take \$209.1 million from September gamblers." *The Associated Press State and Local Wire*. October 17, 2006.

- To update readers who have been following the debate between FEMA and homeowners on tree removal – a decision has been made for the state of Mississippi. FEMA will pay for the removal of some trees from private property. Homeowners must live in a surge-zone and have filed with local government in any of three counties; Hancock, Harrison and Jackson. Applications must be filed in complete form by December 1, 2006. FEMA will cover 90% of the cost of removal for trees that qualify and local governments will contribute the remaining 10%. FEMA will not remove fallen trees or any type of tree debris. They will only be removing standing dead trees, 12 or more inches in diameter, which are within 125 feet of improved property.

Source: Associated Press. "FEMA to pay for removal of some Katrina-killed trees in Mississippi." *The Associated Press State and Local Wire*. October 18, 2006.

Governments' Responses

- Louisiana Governor Blanco is waiting to hold a special session of the legislature until December when the state should know what companies have decided to locate there. She assures that this is to avoid the necessity of a second special session. The Governor and her administration have been actively wooing what they call "megaprojects" to the state. The hope is that at least two of these projects will decide to locate manufacturing facilities in LA with the extension of an extensive number of jobs for the state. Part of the package deal for companies deciding to locate in LA are infrastructure incentives the legislature will need to fund such as road development. It is uncertain if the House and Senate will approve such spending and the final decision is dependent on the size of the state's surplus funds for the year.

Source: Deslatte, Melinda. "Blanco: Waiting on special session because of the economic projects." *The Times-Picayune*. October 17, 2006.

<http://www.nola.com/newsflash/louisiana/index.ssf?/base/news-28/1161104067302110.xml&storylist=louisiana>

- As a direct response to *Brou v. FEMA* the organization is actively attempting to notify evacuees of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita living with a disability or living with someone living with a disability that accessible trailers are available as temporary housing. Evacuees in need of accessible housing need to contact FEMA, even if they have previously done so, to make their needs known. FEMA will meet these needs by providing a new trailer, modifying a current trailer or finding an acceptable alternative living space. The FEMA website states that it may take up to 90 days to receive a new trailer and that individuals and households must contact FEMA before May 9, 2007.
Source: FEMA, "Accessible trailers for people with disabilities available from FEMA." *FEMA Online*. October 6, 2006. <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=30558>
- HUD-HANO is sticking to its June, 2006 plan to demolish four public housing structures in New Orleans. The organizations both argue that they do not have the funds to renovate the structures and that the structures contribute to racial and socioeconomic isolation. It is time, they state, to start new and for those displaced by the hurricanes to do the same. Not everyone would agree and a federal court hearing is set for October 25, 2006. Thus far, rebuilding efforts of other public housing sites have been contracted out to private vendors who have agreed to rebuild a comparable number of accommodations for low income and voucher holding residents. These contractors are quick to disassociate with both HUD and HANO. They remind residents that they build houses and had nothing to do with the demolition decision. Advocates of accessible and affordable housing are skeptical due to historic trends and the dwindling supply of public housing even before Hurricane Katrina.
Source: Filosa, Gwen. "Demolition is developments' destiny, HANO says; Agency confronts civil rights lawsuit." *The Times-Picayune*. October 18, 2006.
- A state district judge has ruled to not rule out the possibility of the validity of lawsuits against Jefferson Parish government head, Aaron Broussard. Many had commented that any lawsuit brought against Broussard would be dismissed from the courts. A judge proved them all wrong this week. Broussard is blamed for some flooding in the parish after Hurricane Katrina because he mandated that levee pump operators evacuate. He asserts this decision was for the safety of the workers. However, without operators the pumps were idle for 24 hours contributing to mass flooding. The outcome of the ruling has yet to be seen.
Source: Associate Press. "Judge rejects call to toss suits over storm flooding." *The associated Press State and Local Wire*. October 18, 2006.
- St. Bernard parish will not be represented by the parish's DA office. The office has declined to represent the government in the filed suit against a controversial rental policy voted on earlier this month. The rental ordinance dictated that renters must be blood relatives of the homeowner. In this majority white parish the ordinance's outcome, even if unintentional, is seen as a racist policy. The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center filed the suit. For more information on these events please review Season of Prayer archives.
Source: Turni Bazile, Karen. "St. Bernard DA recuses office from rental suit; Where parish will find counsel is unclear." *The Times-Picayune*. October 18, 2006.

- A local organization in Mississippi, Mississippi Beyond Katrina, accounts the fluctuating press coverage of the state and notes that new news coverage now focuses on “recovery.” The reports still mention challenges, but a majority show that there are steps being taken and strides being made in Mississippi. On the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina the group found over 5,000 Google hits related to “Mississippi Gulf Coast.” Since the anniversary there is less news to be found, but there is still news. The recognition of the region starkly contrasts with the initial coverage of the storm and its impacts along the coast. A majority of this coverage was, and to an extent continues to focus, on New Orleans. As one city representative stated, “we got handed a big lemon during Katrina, and I think the Coast is making really good lemonade out of it.”
Source: Newsom, Michael. “Mississippi Coast group focuses on media coverage.” *The Associated Press*. October 16, 2006.
- The Times-Picayune was again recognized for its efforts relaying events from the Gulf Coast region during and after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The publisher of the daily was presented the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association’s Leadership Award. A writing team from the paper was also recognized at the awards event.
Source: Associate Press. “Times-Picayune publisher wins SNPA leadership award.” *The Times-Picayune*. October 17, 2006.

Coastal Restoration

- Millions of gallons of plant grown stimulating fertilizer will be making its way into degraded wetlands from an unlikely source. New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish will divert treated sewage waste water, usually dumped into the Mississippi River, into the wetlands. Local scientists, waste water specialists, and public officials agree that the program will not pose a health risk to wildlife or humans. Instead, the nutrient rich water will serve as a catalyst to rejuvenating plant growth and natural reconstruction of the regions original hurricane buffers – the wetlands. Similar projects have been implemented elsewhere, but this particular project would be the largest in scale globally. Implementation of such an expansive project will require monetary support from many sources. For now, it is wait and see. Until the dollars start flowing the sewage will have to stay still.
Source: Brown, Matthew. “Sewage may be coast’s savior; N.O., St. Bernard are pursuing project.” *The Times-Picayune*. October 16, 2006.
- The US Coast Guard has removed nearly 40,000 cubic yards of marine debris from the Mississippi Sound in an effort to make the beach and shoreline safer for public use. This is only the first step of the multi million dollar project contracted to the Coast Guard from FEMA. The next stage of the project will remove debris from the sound that obstructs boating and fishing operations.
Source: FEMA. “Hurricane Katrina Mississippi recovery update: Week 59.” *FEMA Online*. October 13, 2006. <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=30710>