

# Press Release



## L.D.W.F. STOCKING EFFORTS OFF TO SUCCESSFUL START IN PORT SULPHUR WATERWAYS

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The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is progressing rapidly in its effort to stock native fish species in the Port Sulphur area in response to a tilapia eradication using the fish toxicant, rotenone. Earlier this summer, thousands of tilapia found in ditches and ponds in the area were euthanized.

Mark McElroy, LDWF biologist program manager, indicated that the rapid response was successful due to the commitment of a highly skilled departmental team along with the collaboration of the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Ag and Forestry, Plaquemines Parish Government, as well as scientists from Louisiana State University, Nicholls State University, Tulane University and the University of New Orleans. The Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also provided assistance. LDWF assistant secretary Randy Pausina commended all parties involved by stating, “Both the cooperation and professionalism displayed by those who had a role in this effort is to be applauded.”

McElroy added, “The initial phase of the plan, conducted in early June and July, was to eradicate all fish in waters where tilapia were believed to exist. The department is now moving forward with implementing the final two phases of the plan which includes stocking native fish species and determining research needs to monitor the area for a minimum of two years for tilapia survival.

“From the outset, we knew our efforts to completely eradicate the established tilapia populations using chemical alone was at best somewhere between 90 and 99 percent. We believe we are very close to 99 percent. Now it is up to the native fish species we are stocking and the elements to carry the ball to reach our ultimate goal of 100 percent.”

Some of the predatory fish species being stocked by department employees include bowfin, mud catfish, spotted gar, alligator gar, largemouth bass and green sunfish. The fishing ban in this area is expected to remain in effect until stocking efforts are completed.

“Wildlife & Fisheries did a great job in a difficult situation and we thank them for re-stocking the fish,” said Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser.

A majority of the monitoring process will be conducted by scientists from local universities. Their work will include fish sampling and water quality assessment both in and outside the treated area. McElroy explained, “This research will ultimately reveal how successful the rapid response efforts were in this instance and may provide insight into how we can improve future responses to aquatic invasive species introductions.”