

13 FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE EMPLOYEES ARE HONORED IN CEREMONY THANKING HURRICANE EMERGENCY WORKERS

Thirteen Fish and Wildlife Service employees were among 125 workers from 14 Department of the Interior agencies honored in ceremonies January 25 for their rescue and recovery efforts following the Gulf Coast hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

“Today, we celebrate our heroes,” said Interior Secretary Gale Norton, who said that the aftermath of both hurricanes moved agency employees to go “well beyond the call of duty” as they worked to rescue people, deliver supplies and medicine, provide security, employ engineering skills and much, much more.

Service employees honored included Russ Watson, Paul Yakupsack and Mark Parr, of Louisiana; Tom Crews, of North Carolina; Glen Stratton and William D. Wolfe, of Florida; Rick Huffines, William Ferguson and Fred Wetzal, of Georgia; Paul Camp, of Colorado; Curtis Heaton, of Arizona; Richard Johnston, of Texas and LeaAnne Thorne of Washington, DC.

The Service contingent was introduced by narrator Ron Rull of the Secretary’s Office of Communications, who said that Service employees “responded to hurricanes Katrina and Rita with a wide range of vital assistance to hard-hit refugees and local communities. They helped in the rescue and evacuation of several thousand city residents trapped by rising water.”

Secretary Norton said Interior employees left comfortable lives in exchange for long hours and big risks, performing “magnificently” under “the most trying of circumstances.” Norton said she was most impressed by the employees’ initiative, common sense and “get-it-done” attitude throughout the entire ordeal.

“On behalf of President Bush,” she said, “we salute you.”

Each Service employee, along with all of the other department agency employees honored at the ceremony, were presented with a certificate and were individually thanked by Norton and by Deputy Interior Secretary Lynn Scarlett.