Message

From: Hubbard, Joseph [Hubbard.Joseph@epa.gov]
Sent: 9/15/2017 3:39:02 PM
To: R6Press [R6Press@epa.gov]
Subject: Daily News Digest, Friday, Sept. 15
Attachments: Daily News Digest 09152017 .pdf

Hurricane Response:

1 Independent Monitors Found Benzene Levels After Harvey Six Times Higher Than Guidelines, ProPublica, 9/14/17
http://projects.propublica.org/graphics/harvey-manchester
As a longtime resident of Manchester, Guadalupe Hernandez is used to the chemical smells that waft through his southeast Houston, Texas neighborhood, a low-income, predominantly Hispanic community near a Valero Energy refinery. But when Hurricane Harvey blew in the weekend of Aug. 26, the stench became noticeably stronger for about five hours, a scent like "glue or boiled eggs," he said.

2 EPA won't release benzene levels collected post-Harvey; private tests show elevated levels, Texas Tribune
https://www.texastribune.org/2017/09/14/epa-wont-release-benzene-levels-collected-after-harvey-private-monitor/
As a longtime resident of Manchester, Guadalupe Hernandez is used to the chemical smells that waft through his southeast Houston neighborhood, a low-income, predominantly Hispanic community near a Valero Energy refinery. But when Hurricane Harvey blew in the weekend of Aug. 26, the stench became noticeably stronger for about five hours, a scent like "glue or boiled eggs," he said.

3 Valero Houston Plant Underestimated Harvey Benzene Leak, NY Times,
https://www.wsj.com/articles/valero-houston-plant-underestimated-harvey-benzene-leak-1505432176
The chemical plant that released a cloud of a carcinogenic chemical amid Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath in Houston's Manchester neighborhood in August emitted far more of the chemical than it had previously disclosed, environmental regulators said Thursday. The plant, Valero Energy Partners ' Houston refinery, suffered a hurricane-related spill Aug. 27 from the damaged roof of a light crude storage tank, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concluded in an investigation.

4 EPA/TCEQ: Updated status of systems affected by Harvey
http://www.gilmermirror.com/view/full_story/27479023/article-EPA-TCEQ--Updated-status-of-systems-affected-by-Harvey?instance=home_news_bullets
Working together, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality continue to coordinate with local, state and federal officials to address the human health and environmental impacts of Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath, especially the water systems in the affected areas. The TCEQ has approximately 500 people and EPA has 263 people assisting in response to this natural disaster.

5 Oil and chemical spills from Hurricane Harvey big, but dwarfed by Katrina, Reuters
http://www.reuters.com/article/us-storm-harvey-spills/oil-and-chemical-spills-from-hurricane-harvey-big-but-dwarfed-by-katrina-idUSKCN1BQ1E8
More than 22,000 barrels of oil, refined fuels and chemicals spilled at sites across Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, along with millions of cubic feet of natural gas and hundreds of tons of other toxic substances, a Reuters review of company reports to the U.S. Coast Guard shows. The spills, clustered around the heart of the U.S. oil industry, together rank among the worst environmental mishaps in the country in

years, but fall far short of the roughly 190,000 barrels spilled in Louisiana in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina - the last major storm to take dead aim at the U.S. Gulf Coast.

6 Hurricane Harvey floodwaters loaded with E. coli from sewage, fecal bacteria, WMAR
http://www.abc2news.com/news/national/hurricane-harvey-floodwaters-contain-sewage-fecal-bacteria
Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath have dumped trillions of gallons of rain across Texas and Louisiana over six days. Homes, office buildings and other structures along the Gulf Coast and in Houston's Harris County, were flooded, their occupants forced to find higher ground. To reach safety, most local residents waded through the murky streams, in some cases for hours.

7 Harvey's Poorest Victims Will Never Rebuild. They're Getting Evicted, Mother Jones
http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2017/09/harveys-poorest-victims-will-never-rebuild-theyre-getting-evicted/
Hilton Kelley has been sounding off on Facebook Live the past few days about families who evacuated their homes to escape Hurricane Harvey and are now getting eviction notices. The families live in Port Arthur, Texas, the small Gulf Coast city about 90 miles east of Houston, but are currently scattered across Louisiana and Texas. Kelley himself had to evacuate—his fourth time doing so in the last 15 years due to hurricane flooding—but was able to make it back to his home last week. He's now trying to locate as many dispersed families as possible via social media to find out who hasn't come back and why. That's when he found out about the eviction notices.

8 Include Superfund site in Harvey relief efforts, Baytown Sun
http://baytownsun.com/opinion/guest_columns/article_5d22a702-998b-11e7-b9e6-97f822faed76.html
We expect some basic things from government: most people agree that protection from enemies, both foreign and domestic describes one key role. We have spent huge amounts to fight foreign enemies, but combating the problems we face at home does not come easy for Austin or Washington, and our community hurts because of it.

9 Harvey and Irma present nearly perfect conditions for Zika-spreading mosquitoes, AP
http://wtop.com/government/2017/09/harvey-and-irma-present-nearly-perfect-conditions-for-zika-spreading-mosquitoes/
Even as the floodwaters from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma begin to recede, significant but less obvious health threats remain. The standing water the storms have left behind will almost certainly cause an explosion of the mosquito population. In addition to the already difficult task of recovery, the affected areas will need to stem the mosquito population growth to avoid the potential for a disease outbreak.

10 Lingering threats to health, Houston Chron
http://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/article/Lingering-threats-to-health-12199200.php
It took about two weeks for firefighters to start dying from radiation sickness at the Chernobyl nuclear plant. As they rushed into the flames in the Ukrainian morning, the crew didn't know if they were responding to an electrical fire or a core meltdown, nor were they informed about the radioactive threat posed by the debris and smoke. To date, seven firefighter deaths have been attributed to the 1986 disaster - the most recent in 2004, when one of the heads of the fire brigade died from cancer.

11 Planned closure of Houston EPA lab draws protests, Houston Chron
http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Planned-closure-of-Houston-EPA-lab-draws-protests-12199382.php
Conservationists and labor union officials argued Wednesday that the potential closing of the Environmental Protection Agency's regional lab in Houston, which is expected to play a key role in Hurricane Harvey

recovery, is among harmful impacts of the Trump administration's drive to slice staff and mission in the agency. The EPA's Region 6 Environmental Services Laboratory, which serves a five-state region, is scheduled for closing when the lease on its rented, 41,000 square-foot space in southwest Houston expires in 2020, officials of the American Federation of Government Employees said they were told.

Around the Region:

12 Highway 84 Landfill opponents, city clash on pollution record of existing landfill, Waco Tribune, 9/15/17
http://www.wacotrib.com/news/city_of_waco/highway-landfill-opponents-city-clash-on-pollution-record-of-existing/article_71108abb-fb01-55e3-97a5-741883db3ec8.html
The campaign against a new landfill off Highway 84 has opened up a new front, as opponents allege that past city mismanagement of the existing landfill next door fouled Lake Waco. In a press release this week, Citizens Against the Highway 84 Landfill cite environmental violations that state regulators found in 2001 and 2003 as evidence that runoff from the landfill polluted Waco's drinking water source.

13 Belton: Dog Ridge Water Supply Corp issues boil order, KWTX, 9/14/17
http://lubbockonline.com/local-news/news/2017-09-13/cattle-company-won-t-move-dairy-facility-panhandle-amid-resident
The Dog Ridge Water Supply Company issued a boil order Thursday for some of its customers. The order affects customers in the Whispering Hollow subdivision, off FM 1670 and the streets of Whisper Trail and Whisper Hollow Road.

14 Governor tours Austin FEMA Command Center, Fox 7, 9/14/17
http://www.fox7austin.com/news/local-news/governor-tours-austin-fema-command-center
A small army of 2000 emergency response managers with FEMA has set up shop in what was the corporate office for Golfsmith. What's being teed up by the 2000 workers is part of a unified effort to help the communities damaged by Hurricane Harvey. Gov. Greg Abbott was briefed on the recovery work coordinated out of this central location in N Austin.

15 Texas A&M Notification Of Sewage Spill, WTAW, 9/14/17
http://wtaw.com/2017/09/14/texas-notification-sewage-spill/
On Tuesday, September 5, 2017, a sewage line back up caused a spill to occur in a small, isolated area of the Texas A&M University campus in College Station. There is no indication of any resulting problem with local domestic water systems. Immediately upon discovery, Texas A&M notified the City of College Station about the incident, and shortly thereafter notified the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regional office in Waco.

16 Air quality alert issued for New Orleans; sensitive groups urged to avoid outdoor activity, WGNO, 9/14/17
http://wgno.com/2017/09/14/air-quality-alert-issued-for-new-orleans-sensitive-groups-urged-to-avoid-outdoor-activity/
The New Orleans Health Department has issued an Air Quality Alert for New Orleans until midnight tonight, Thursday, Sept. 14. An upper-level ridge of high pressure, warm temperatures and sunny skies will enhance ozone formation allowing pollutants to accumulate.

17 U.S. and Mexico set to sign landmark Colorado River water-sharing deal, Desert Sun, 9/13/17

http://www.desertsun.com/story/news/environment/2017/09/13/u-s-and-mexico-set-sign-landmark-colorado-river-water-sharing-deal/663017001/
The U.S. and Mexican governments are close to signing a landmark Colorado River deal that will establish rules for sharing water over the next decade and lay out cooperative efforts intended to head off severe shortages. Mexican and American officials have scheduled a signing ceremony on Sept. 26 in Ciudad Juárez, officials at California water districts said this week. They said that formal event will be followed by a ceremonial signing in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Sept. 27 attended by representatives from U.S. states.

18 Local electric car owners express frustration over lack of EV infrastructure in Louisiana, WAFB, 9/14/17
http://www.wafb.com/story/36370415/local-electric-car-owners-express-frustration-over-lack-of-ev-infrastructure-in-louisiana
As of May, there were about 940 electric cars (or EVs) in Louisiana, according to Ann Shaneyfelt, the executive director of Louisiana Clean Fuels. We talked to some local EV owners at an event the organization was hosting in downtown Baton Rouge Thursday to raise awareness about the benefits of electric cars. The EV owners we spoke with say they're pleased with their electric cars but are frustrated with the lack of charging stations in the city and across the state.

19 Owasso Wastewater Treatment Plant kicks off $13M overhaul with engineering approval, Owasso Reporter, 9/14/17
http://www.tulsaworld.com/communities/owasso/news/communitynews/owasso-wastewater-treatment-plant-kicks-off-m-overhaul-with-engineering/article_48f21351-f9af-5786-9b92-7771568cd686.html
Earlier this month, the Owasso Public Works Authority (OPWA) approved engineering services for its Wastewater Treatment Plant and Main Plant Lift Station Expansion Project. The newly passed proposal calls for making improvements to a number of critical systems at the facility due to aged equipment and to accommodate increased usage across the community.

20 Hurricane Harvey flood insurance payouts could top $11 billion, Times Picayune, 9/13/17
http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/09/flood_insurance_losses_from_hu.html#incart_river_index
The head of the National Flood Insurance Program said Wednesday (Sept. 13) that early estimates show Hurricane Harvey will result in about $11 billion in payouts to insured homeowners, mostly in southeast Texas. That would likely put Harvey as the second costliest storm in the history of the program, after more than $16 billion was paid out for Hurricane Katrina.

21 New Orleans mayoral candidates talk flood risk, climate change, Times Picayune, 9/14/17
http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/09/new_orleans_mayoral_candidates.html#incart_river_index
Mayoral candidates promised a complete overhaul of the Sewerage and Water Board at a forum on flooding and adapting to environmental change Thursday (Sept. 14) night. But dumping on perhaps the most hated department of the city was about as far as many candidates got. The mayoral forum was moderated by the director of The Greater New Orleans Water Collaborative, Nathan Lott, and took place at the New Orleans Jazz Market, Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard.

22 THREE WAYS TEXAS COULD SAFEGUARD AGAINST TOXIC EMISSIONS DURING THE NEXT MAJOR STORM, 9/13/17
http://www.texasstandard.org/stories/categories/energy-environment/
While we're still a long way from understanding the full environmental impact of Hurricane Harvey, the damage has been done, and experts say Harvey has highlighted inconsistencies in Texas' ability to contain hazardous materials in the face of future storms. The storm was responsible for 600,000 gallons of spilled

gasoline statewide, much of it in Houston. More than 7 million pounds of toxic chemicals were released into the air. Rain from Harvey flooded Superfund sites, raising questions about the government response. And explosions and fires at the Arkema chemical plant west of Houston sent more than a dozen first responders to the hospital.

23 Newtron Group, founder commit $1.5 million to Water Campus, Advocate, 9/14/17
http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/business/article_9daa8f3e-9962-11e7-ab95-bb4ccdef99b1.html
The Newtron Group and founder Newton B. Thomas have committed $1.5 million to the Water Campus, a 35-acre science campus on the riverfront downtown. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation and its real estate division, Commercial Properties Realty Trust, are building the Water Campus where scientists and engineers can work together to find ways to adapt to climate change, rising seas and flooding coastlands.

24 Enel brews up Oklahoma wind power agreement with Anheuser-Busch, Oklahoman, 9/14/17
http://newsok.com/enel-brews-up-oklahoma-wind-power-agreement-with-anheuser-busch/article/5563970
Budweiser, this wind is for you. Anheuser-Busch and Enel Green Power said Wednesday they have signed a power agreement for electricity from an under-construction wind farm in northern Oklahoma.

25 Little-known agency integral to hurricane prep, response, Victoria Advocate, 9/15/17
https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2017/sep/14/little-known-agency-integral-to-hurricane-prep-res/
The amount of water flowing down the Guadalupe River in Victoria after Hurricane Harvey is record setting. There was 82,900 cubic feet of water flowing per second Aug. 30, the day the river peaked at 31.25 feet.