



The Storm With No Name

August 2016 Louisiana Flood Facts

The rains began on Thursday, August 11.

In August 2016, a low-pressure weather system moved along the Gulf Coast and stalled over Baton Rouge and surrounding parishes. Within 48 hours, **7.2 trillion gallons** of rain fell with some areas receiving up to **32 inches of rain**. The massive rainfall flowed **into 10 rivers in 22 Louisiana parishes** (counties), 8 of them at record levels. They quickly overflowed their banks and their flood waters backed up into the bayous and streams that fed them—and these waterways quickly overflowed their banks. Canals and drainage ditches throughout the region flooded as well.

The flood waters reached homes where residents had lived for thirty and forty years and never experienced flooding. In the end, over 150,000 homes were damaged. Over half the damage, by some estimates, came in areas that flood maps had declared at low risk for flooding. Thus, over **80% of damaged homes** had no flood insurance. Only 5 months before the August flood, **12,000 homes** were damaged in **26 Louisiana parishes**. There were many families who were flooded in both March and August, even though most of these homes were *not* in a flood plane and had never flooded before. The majority of homeowners that flooded in both March and August were ineligible for FEMA assistance because they were still repairing their homes and had not yet been able to obtain flood insurance.

Summary statistics of the flood's damage give some sense of the dimension of the suffering:

- 13 people died.
- 30,000 people had to be rescued from their homes by 280 high-water vehicles, 55 boats, 9 helicopters—provided by the state—and more people were rescued by what Louisianans term “the Cajun Navy,” a flotilla of private boat owners who sought to help people.
- Over 16,000 people had to take refuge in shelters which opened as the flood waters continued to rise.
- Estimates for the number of homes flooded in 22 Louisiana parishes are as high as 150,000.
- Over 152,000 individuals or households registered with FEMA.
- At the height of the flood, 265,000 students were out of school in the Baton Rouge and Livingston area alone. In Baton Rouge, 10 schools flooded; only 2 of them have reopened;



5,000 of 40,000 students in the system were displaced by the flood. And school enrollment had dropped by over a 1000 from last year.

- A total of 36 parishes were affected by the March and August 2016 Floods.

Recovery has been incredibly slow.

Shelter-At-Home - The state adopted a “Shelter-at-Home” strategy that provided minimal repairs to allow homeowners to remain in their homes while restoring the larger damage. 18,000 households signed up for the program, but the repairs proved slow and it took months for most to get back into their homes. **By mid-2017, there were 11,000 families living in Shelter-at-Home houses.** There is no data on how many are still living in gutted homes, but rebuild organizations continue to report families living in substandard, unsafe and unsanitary homes.

FEMA Housing - FEMA has **provided only 4,000 manufactured housing units (MHU’s)** for flood victims. Typically, FEMA temporary units are installed on a homeowner’s property, but these new MHU’s were too large to fit on most flood-damaged properties. **Currently, there are still 1,000 families living in MHU’s.** As of May 1, 2018, families were required to move out of the unit or begin paying rent to keep it. Most of these are homeowners who are still paying mortgages on homes they are unable to live in.

Federal Funding - Louisiana was awarded **\$1.3 billion** in **federal funds** for flood recovery which is managed by the Restore Louisiana Task Force. Of that, **only 14,370 homeowners** have been awarded grants totaling **\$206.5million**. Yet only \$60.5 million have been disbursed. What is even more concerning is that the total **administration and inspection costs thus far (\$74.7 million) surpass the amount of homeowner disbursements.** *See chart below.*

One issue is that FEMA required applicants to apply for an SBA loan in order to receive assistance. The amount of the loan was then counted as assistance received, which meant that an award of federal funds was considered a duplication of benefits, even though homeowners are required to repay the loan (in addition to their existing mortgages). Over 6,000 homeowners were denied federal funds on this basis. But in September 2018, a law was passed to waive the duplication of benefits caused by the SBA loans . . . but only until 2021. This legislation opens up approximately \$215 million in federal grants for homeowners.

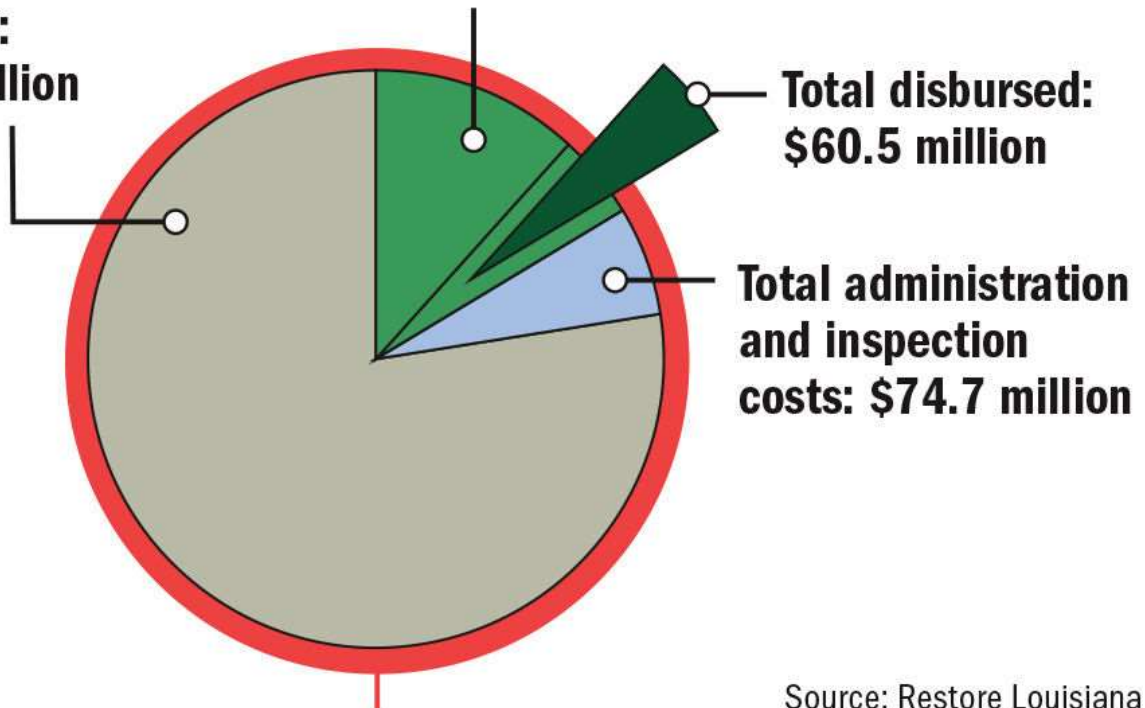


The chart below shows federal funds disbursements as of March 2018.

STATUS OF RESTORE FUNDS

**Program funds
remaining:
\$1.019 billion**

Total awarded: \$206.5 million



Program total: \$1.3 billion

Source: Restore Louisiana

Advocate graphic by **DAN SWENSON**

Many, many displaced families remain in the homes of friends or other temporary housing, and volunteers are scarce. Without intervention, our homeless population will remain unmanageable and families throughout these 22 parishes will continue to live in unsafe, unsanitary conditions.