

Feds end their investigation into Hurricane Gustav cleanup

By Bob Anderson

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LIVINGSTON — Federal authorities have closed their criminal investigation into parts of the Hurricane Gustav cleanup work in Livingston Parish without indictments, but a state investigation could be revived, District Attorney Scott Perrilloux said Wednesday.

Though the U.S. Attorney's Office has determined there are not any cases to be made on federal law violations, that does not mean sufficient evidence may exist to constitute violations of state law, the district attorney for the 21st Judicial District said.

"We'll look and see," Perrilloux said.

Whether to take the matter to a state grand jury is being considered, the district attorney said.

Perrilloux said the U.S. Attorney's Office informed him it has dropped the matter.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Walt Green on Wednesday afternoon declined to comment.

Perrilloux said his office had begun looking at allegations of Gustav cleanup wrongdoing when federal authorities contacted him and said they were investigating the matter as well, so he put the state investigation on hold.

When asked about possible targets of the state investigation, Perrilloux said he is open to looking at anybody who might have been involved in illegal activities relating to the cleanup in Livingston Parish.

Hurricane Gustav did major wind damage to Livingston Parish in September 2008.

Cleanup of that damage and related work resulted in bills of more than \$60 million and has spawned several lawsuits.

In a separate matter related to the cleanup, the parish is still attempting to get the Federal Emergency Management Agency to pay for much of the costs.

Some decisions by FEMA not to pay the parish for most of the cleanup bills are under appeal and others are under review by the U.S. inspector general.

Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., said last week that she had persuaded the inspector general to meet with Livingston Parish officials to hear complaints about contractors' cleanup bills that have gone unpaid for nearly five years.

If evidence warrants the decision, the inspector general has the power to send FEMA to arbitration with the parish, she said.