

Water: A Necessity and A Devastation

The glassy shimmer of sun reflects off the deep pool of water compiled on the road. Avery Frink, 22, sits inside his black mustang, deciding whether or not to journey through the murky pool.

“I never know when the water is too high to get through. It’s ridiculous how bad it floods here,” Frink said. “You can hardly go anywhere because all the roads are flooded.”

The engine revs. The dark mustang slowly crawls through the water. It reaches dry land after swimming through five inches of water. Surrounding every road and piece of land are pools of green liquid.

“Life still goes on regardless of the flooding,” Frink said. “But it gets extremely aggravating. It makes you figure out 20 different ways to get to one place.”

As the mustang travels forward, Frink is shocked by the damage the heavy rain fall caused. He sees houses submerged into water, parking lots transformed into swimming pools, and deep ponds that cover what used to be land.

Louisiana is known for unescapable flooding that occurs when there is any amount of rain. Recently, the flooding has been disastrous, particularly in northern Louisiana. Northern Louisiana received over 20 inches of rain in early March, 2016, causing significant floods. Areas near Monroe, LA acquired a staggering 26 inches of rain, breaking all-time flooding records, according to weather.com.

Relief teams and volunteers traveled to northern Louisiana in recent weeks to help clean up damage the flooding has left behind. Houses were destroyed leaving wreckage everywhere.

Green grass that once covered the ground is now brown mush. Interstates were closed going to Mississippi and Texas causing a vast amount of traffic for travelers.

According to nola.com, over 3,500 homes were evacuated in northern Louisiana due to extreme flooding. On top of all the physical damage, six people were killed from the floods.

Paul O'Keefe, an instructor in LSU's Department of Geography and Anthropology, says that massive flooding caused by heavy rainfall should not be a shock to Louisiana residents.

"Flooding has always been a problem in Louisiana and there's not a whole lot being done about it," O'Keefe said. "When the rivers over-flow that's when the most damage is done."

O'Keefe explains that minor improvements, such as new drainage systems, could help flooding in Louisiana on a small scale.

"Recently, LSU made a contract with the Mississippi River to dump water and sewage in the river when local flooding starts," O'Keefe said. "Some people may not like that but it has reduced some of the negative effects of flooding."

Now that LSU has a contract with the Mississippi River, water that would normally pile on streets has a place to go. This has solved the problem of Burbank Drive (close to Nicholson Drive) being closed, which would normally create massive amounts of traffic for students trying to get on campus.

Lauren Fontenot, a mechanical engineer at DOW Chemical Company, engineers water tanks in Baton Rouge, LA. Fontenot says that the contract allows companies such as DOW to dump gallons of sewage in the river, making available space in drainage systems for standing water.

“The new storage in the drainage systems reduces flooding on LSU campus,” Fontenot said.

“Buildings, like Lockett Hall, that are prone to flood won’t be flooded as much anymore.”

Though there is not much being done to prevent massive flooding in Louisiana, environmentalists are trying to find small solutions for solving flood problems in this state.

Frink experiences the flooding on a regular basis living in the Barksdale Air Force Base located outside of Shreveport, LA. Frink grew up in Maryland where flooding is rare. In fact, he never owned a pair of rain boots until he was stationed to Louisiana.

“I’ve never experienced flooding like this before in my life,” Frink said. “You practically need to drive a truck to get anywhere when it rains.”

In his two years in Barksdale, Frink has seen many cars stuck in the water from flooding. He has helped people that were stranded in water return to dry land. He never thought he would witness the devastations of flooding on personal level.

Even the Air Force base is largely affected by the flooding after they do everything possible to equip base for the worst.

When a storm is near, everyone prepares. Typically the base gets the least amount of flooding opposed to other places, but they still can’t avoid the inevitable. People pile sand bags feet high around every building on base in hopes of preventing water damage.

“The rain is a huge expense for base,” Frink said. “All the sand bags we buy and put down cost time and money, not to mention repairing buildings that get damaged.”

The last storm caused the base to temporarily shut down buildings and outdoor activities such as their shooting range. Residents of the base are required to have flood insurance for their home due to previous floods that damaged and ruined homes.

“Every flood that we get on base and in the city leaves us more prepared for the next one,” Frink said. “However, they are still tough to get through, especially after this one.”