



THE REDSTICK WEEKLY

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ALABAMA RAVAGED ONCE AGAIN



Photo by Joe Songer

Tine Locke, right, comforts Ywonna Whatley in the front yard of Whatley's damaged home on Harness Circle in Clay, Alabama, where a tornado swept through Jan. 23, 2012. Whatley lives across the street from Christina Heichelbech, 16, who was killed by the storm.

"I would really like to never see another tornado again."

— Associated Press

Knowing this community's history of tornadoes, Jhan Powers gets nervous anytime violent weather rolls in. While her house was spared this time, a tornado demolished nearby mobile homes — all of which were just a short drive from a path of destruction cut just last year by a deadly twister.

At least two tornadoes roared across the heart of Alabama on Monday, killing two people and injuring more than 100 others during the middle of the night. More than 200 homes

were destroyed, the Red Cross said, and just as many houses were heavily damaged.

The storm awoke families, and many huddled together as winds howled outside. After the storms passed, rescue teams had to go door-to-door in some places, calling out to residents.

The unincorporated community of Oak Grove was hit hard in April and again Monday, though officials said none of the same neighborhoods was struck twice.

See **TORNADO**, p.4

STRANDED

Dozens of Stranded Dolphins on Cape Cod Shores Perplex Rescuers



Photo by Julia Cumes/Associated Press

A rescue team with a dolphin and her calf this month before releasing them into Cape Cod Bay.

— Jess Bidgood

When a single dolphin washed up on Cape Cod on Jan. 12, it was nothing out of the ordinary.

But eight days later, 81 more dolphins had been found stranded on this craggy coastline of Cape Cod, according to the International Fund for Animal Welfare, bringing the weekly count unusually close to the 120 animals the group typically responds to in high stranding season, which typically runs from January to April. By Jan. 23, the count was 85 dolphins.

"It's just about as intense as I've ever experienced," said Katie Moore, the manager of the mammal rescue and research team at the nonprofit fund, which employs six scientists yearlong to rescue dolphins and whales that find themselves the unwitting occupants of Cape Cod's empty winter beaches.

It is common for dolphins to be corralled by the cape's U-shape and flummoxed by its shallow inlets and extreme tides. In fact, Cape Cod is, like parts of New Zealand and Australia, a world hotspot for dolphin strandings.

But so many dolphins washing up in less than two weeks — 61 of which were dead, killed by stress or injuries from the stranding — has baffled researchers, who have been working relentlessly with volunteers to rescue as many as possible.

Six of those dolphins turned up on Thursday in "The Gut" of the Herring River, in Wellfleet, a waterway in the Cape Cod National Seashore that turns into a squelchy stretch of sticky mud at low tide. When researchers arrived, they found five live dolphins gulping for air with their blowholes, sounding like asthmatic humans. The sixth dolphin was found dead.

See **DOLPHINS** p.5

Holden may testify in Grace trial

— Bill Lodge

Kip Holden may testify during the racketeering and fraud trial of former St. Gabriel Mayor George L. Grace, a federal judge said Monday.

Four other mayors or former mayors also are included on that witness list, as are Louisiana Legislative Auditor Daryl G. Purpera and former Legislative Auditor Steven J. Theriot. Also listed is Walter Monsour, president and chief executive officer of the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority.

U.S. District Judge S. Maurice Hicks Jr., of Shreveport, did not tell 79 prospective jurors whether Holden, Purpera, Theriot, Monsour or any of the other possible witnesses would testify for the prosecution or defense. The Jury will simply be forced to wait and for the judge's decision. Hicks simply wanted to know whether members of the jury panel knew any of the people who may be called to the witness stand during the three-week trial.

Hicks volunteered to preside at the trial after the death in July of Chief U.S. District Judge Ralph E. Tyson left dozens of unfinished cases in Baton Rouge federal court.

Grace's 2010 indictment alleges that he accepted more than \$20,000 in cash and other gifts from company executives wanting to do business in St. Gabriel.

Baton Rouge businessman-Blaine Efferson is identified by Assistant U.S. Attorney Corey R. Amundson in court filings



Photo by Bill Feig

Former St. Gabriel Mayor George Grace, right, enters the federal courthouse Monday in Baton Rouge for the opening of his trial on racketeering and fraud charges in a FBI sting operation. Grace is accompanied by one of his attorneys, Rob Marionneau.

as a businessman who will testify against Grace. Efferson, referred to in the indictment only as "B.E.," is alleged to have paid Grace \$7,500 at the then-mayor's request as Efferson's firm received \$450,000 from St. Gabriel for goods and services.

Some of the other businessmen mentioned in the indictment actually were undercover FBI agents and an undercover operative who allegedly paid Grace more than \$13,500 in return for his promise of help in acquiring municipal business for a garbage-can-cleaning company known as Cifer 5000.

Cifer 5000 was a fake firm used by the FBI in a sting known as Operation Blighted Officials.

Five other municipal officials in White Castle, Port Allen and New Roads have been convicted as a result of that sting operation.

Two other current Louisiana

mayors, Harold Rideau, of Baker, and Jamie Mayo, of Monroe, also were listed by Hicks as potential witnesses at Grace's trial. Holden, Rideau and Mayo have never been accused of any wrongdoing by federal authorities involved in Operation Blighted Officials.

Former Port Allen Mayor Derek Lewis, who pleaded guilty last year to a felony charge that resulted from the FBI's undercover investigation, has not been sentenced. Lewis is among the potential witnesses identified Monday by Hicks.

Grace's defense attorney, Lewis O. Unglesby, has been granted permission by Judge Hicks to call the former White Castle Mayor, Maurice Brown, to the witness stand. Brown was convicted on charges related to Cifer 5000 last year and is serving a prison term.

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