

Reports cite significant improvement at Feliciana Forensic Facility

By Marsha Shuler/
Capital News Bureau

The Feliciana Forensic Facility shows "significant areas of improvement and strength," according to reports received by a federal judge monitoring state compliance with a court order to upgrade conditions there.

The reports were made by consultants for the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. The consultants presented the material at a status conference with U.S. District Judge Frank Polozola.

The consultants — Dr. Charles A. Braslow and Dr. Robert P. Granacher Jr. — also recommended further improvements at the hospital for the

criminally insane, including standardization of patient evaluation and an active monitoring program to assure that services are available on a timely basis.

State officials have until Dec. 31 to respond to the recommendations, Department of Health and Hospitals counsel Charles Castille said Tuesday.

"The medical services at Feliciana Forensic Facility function well at the present time," Braslow said in a report evaluating medical care.

In an evaluation of psychiatric services, Granacher said, "When I compare my visit back in the early 1980s with the current visit, there is no question that this facility has shown significant areas of improvement and

strength."
"Most of those areas of improvement seem directly related to mental health rather than corrections functions," he said.

Castille said the reports show "there has been substantial progress compared to what it used to be."

The state has been under a federal consent decree to upgrade the conditions at Feliciana Forensic since December 1983. The consent decree stemmed from a Justice Department investigation at the facility which turned up violations of patients' civil rights.

Forensic is a state psychiatric hospital which houses several kinds of patients, including pre-trial detainees deemed not competent to assist their

lawyers, people declared not guilty by reason of insanity of felony charges, and people who will never obtain competency to stand trial.

The Justice Department intervened in previous lawsuits that challenged the care at the facility. Before trial, Polozola encouraged the Justice Department, state officials and plaintiffs to iron out a consent decree — an agreement designed to resolve the problems.

The consent decree called for fewer patients at Feliciana Forensic; compliance with state licensing standards, federal standards for mental health centers, standards in state law about rights of patients and guidelines for the use of psychotropic drugs.

"Gradually the conditions have been improving," Castille said.

Castille said the department likely will embrace the recommendations made by the experts. One of the recommendations — the hiring of a full-time clinical director — already has been accomplished, he said.

"I think the chances are good that, within a couple of years, that if we can get these things done to everybody's satisfaction, the judge will look favorably upon dismissing the lawsuit," Castille said.

Granacher recommended that the state move toward hiring more social workers with doctoral and master's degrees because of the problem in attracting psychiatrists.

"Since it appears the salary scale in Louisiana is so poor that the likelihood of attracting psychiatrists is quite slim. I suggest that some of the monies reserved for the hiring of psychiatrists be transferred so that more Ph.D.'s and M.S.W.'s can be hired," Granacher said.

He also recommended the standardization of pre-trial evaluations to assure reliability of examinations hospitalwide on an on-going basis.

On the medical side, Braslow said physician staffing should be maintained at current levels. He also said the quality assurance program should actively monitor all aspects of patient care, and in particular, routinely review availability and timeliness of specialty clinic, laboratory and radiological services.

Baker man now facing 100 years imprisonment

A Baker man who authorities said played a key role in the death of a teenager who was accidentally shot by his father was given a 100-year prison sentence Tuesday.

State District Judge Bob Hester doled out the maximum jail sentences to Lawrence "Buck" Hunter, 26, of 1915 Hovey Drive, who pleaded guilty on Sept. 26 to one count each of attempted second-degree murder and aggravated burglary and two counts of aggravated battery.

Hunter's defense attorney, Orselni Beard, said he was shocked by the length of the sentences and called it "extremely excessive." He said he will appeal the sentences to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal.

Beard said Hunter had never been convicted of a felony offense before he pleaded guilty last September. He was officially classified as a first felony offender, but the victims and a presentence investigation report ordered by Hester recommended that Hunter receive the maximum sentences, he said.

Hester sentenced Hunter to 50 years in jail for attempted second-degree murder, 30 years for aggravated burglary and 10 years on each of the two aggravated battery charges. The judge ordered the sentences to run consecutively.

Hunter originally pleaded not guilty to the charges but changed his plea to avoid putting his family through the

ordal of a lengthy trial, according to Beard.

Hunter was charged in May 1987 with multiple counts of attempted murder. He also was involved in the unrelated death of Elvin Jones Jr., 19, who was accidentally shot by his father while Hunter burglarized the family's Zachary home, authorities said.

Hunter also was charged with three counts of attempted second-degree murder in connection with the Oct. 31, 1986, shooting of three women in a South Plaquemine Road home. The women were identified as Cheryl Wallace, Beatrice Jones and Pamela Johnson.

Hunter sideswiped a car containing the women and forced the car into a ditch after he mistook one of the women for his girlfriend, investigators said. Hunter and his girlfriend had been arguing.

He chased them to a house where one of the victims lived and shot one of them in the front yard, authorities said. He shot the second woman as she ran through the house and the third woman was shot through the back door, authorities said.

Hunter shot the third victim a second time as she knelt in the back yard and pleaded for her life, authorities said.

In an agreement with the district attorney's office, Hunter pleaded guilty to the attempted second-degree murder of Beatrice Jones and the other attempted murder charges were reduced to aggravated battery.

Hot new toy



A Boston resident holds "Raphael," one of the four Teen-age Mutant Ninja Turtles that have hit No. 11 in the Toy and Hobby World charts of best sellers. The turtles, created by Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman, are threatening to close ranks on G.I. Joe at the top of the Christmas toy market.

HUD lauds use of grant for crawfish export firm

By Fred Kalmbach/
State-Times writer

Baton Rougeans and Turks trying to satisfy a Scandinavian craving for crawfish have netted a national award for their locally based efforts.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Tuesday recognized Mayor-President Pat Screen, KSM Development, the city parish economic development office for launching export operations from a Baton Rouge plant.

KSM, based in Istanbul, Turkey, turned to Louisiana for crawfish to ship to Sweden. The Swedish appetite for crawfish apparently has outstripped the supply in Turkey, where KSM has been harvesting the delicacy for more than 20 years.

Baton Rouge officials loaned \$500,000 from a federal development grant to KSM investors, who then used the loan to leverage \$2.1 million in private funds, according to HUD Regional Director Frank Mosely.

Mosely told an audience at an award ceremony that HUD recognized the Baton Rouge development project for its unusual and creative use of a federal community development block grant. The grants usually are used for projects like drainage systems and street repairs.

"There's nothing wrong with that," Mosely said, "but what we want is for cities to be more innovative with the grants. That's the way to fight

homelessness and poverty and crime — having a good economic base."

The KSM/Baton Rouge joint project was one of 411 finalists chosen from grant-funded activities in 20,000 cities, Mosely said.

KSM's plant in Baton Rouge employs 260 workers during the height of the three-month crawfish season in Louisiana, said Leonardo Molina, general manager of the facilities here.

The plant can clean, boil, freeze and package up to 15,000 pounds of crawfish every hour, Molina said. Last year, the plant exported 1.7 million pounds, he noted.

Helping to fuel the crawfish crunch is a Swedish holiday in August that marks the beginning of the Swedish crawfish season. The 8.5 million Swedes eat away more than 6 million pounds of crawfish during the five-month season, Molina said.

Though Swedes prefer their own crawfish, demand far exceeds the home-grown catch. Swedes will pay up to \$1.70 per crawfish for American, Turkish and Spanish substitutes, Molina said.

KSM had to alter the process it uses in Turkey because Louisiana crawfish differ from those found in that country. Because Louisiana crawfish burrow into bayou mud, they must be cleaned three times instead of just once. Also, Louisiana crawfish must be steamed to force out fat, which the animals seem to store more readily in the bayou than in Turkish streams.

Rollins operation in N.J. fined \$1.95 million in waste case

New Jersey officials have fined Rollins Environmental Services Inc. of Bridgeport, N.J., \$1.95 million for allegedly mismanaging shipments of hazardous waste that later were disposed of at a dump site unsuitable for hazardous materials.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection imposed the largest fine in its history on the company, which is a sister corporation of Rollins in Baton Rouge.

A spokesman for Christians for Good Government, a Baton Rouge organization that opposes Rollins' efforts to build new landfills and incinerators at its Baton Rouge facility, condemned the company.

"Here is more-than-ample proof that Rollins is simply incapable of being a good corporate neighbor in any community, and that is why we are fighting them right now, right here," Vincent Watkins said.

Frank Willis, vice president of legal and environmental affairs for Rollins, said his company was set up by another waste disposer and is itself the victim of fraud. Rollins will appeal the fine, Willis said.

Willis said Waste Conversion of Hatfield, Pa., not only set up Rollins, but also sued Rollins under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO statute.

"To suggest that we duped them is just a joke," Willis said of Waste Conversion. "They duped us."

A spokesman for Waste Conversion said Rollins was responsible for disposal of its hazardous waste and signed all of the manifests that allowed the waste to leave the Rollins incinerator in Bridgeport.

The New Jersey DEP also fined Waste Conversion \$3.012 million and notified the company of the department's intent to revoke its New Jersey hazardous waste transporter's license.

Both companies have 20 days from the issuance of the notice to appeal. The notice is dated Dec. 2.

The violations involved shipments of hazardous incinerator ash and scrubber sludge from the Rollins facility in Bridgeport, which allegedly occurred

from October 1985 through November 1986, according to Christopher J. Daggert of the New Jersey DEP.

The New Jersey DEP notice of civil penalty said that Waste Conversion officials "committed fraud, deceit and misrepresentation" in their dealings with Rollins. It also notes that the company made an "illegal profit" from Rollins.

The NJDEP notice said Waste Conversion officials knew the waste the company was paid by Rollins to transport to a disposal facility in Michigan was hazardous waste, yet manifested it as non-hazardous. Waste Conversion conspired to keep that fact from Rollins, the notice said.

Willis said Rollins thought it was properly manifesting the waste as hazardous waste, but the New Jersey DEP disagreed.

According to the New Jersey document, a salesman for Waste Conversion gave a stack of manifests to

Steven Petner, plant manager for the Rollins plant in New Jersey, in late 1985. Petner asked why the manifests read "non-hazardous material" and was told by the Waste Conversion salesman that the State of Michigan, where the waste was going, did not consider the incinerator ash and scrubber lime sludge hazardous, the document said.

The NJDEP concluded that Petner signed the manifests even though he "knew or should have known that the waste was . . . hazardous and that the waste manifests prepared by Waste Conversion were erroneous and illegal. Although he should have refused to sign the manifests," he did not, the document said.

Brent Kopenhaver, Waste Conversion vice president of finance, said his company originally proposed to dispose of non-hazardous waste from Rollins and that proposal was "based on analytical data provided to us by Rollins." The waste from Rollins was

"approved at the landfill as non-hazardous," he said. "The waste was described on each of the 600 manifests as non-hazardous, non-regulated material which Rollins officials signed."

Kopenhaver said that under federal environmental laws, the responsibility for waste "cannot be delegated to any other party" by Rollins.

Willis said Rollins shipped the waste with the manifest of 0499, which indicates a mercury-based waste. Willis said the type of waste incinerated at the New Jersey plant varied so greatly that the company would have to put so many as 288 different waste codes on the small manifest form for each shipment.

He said the code for mercury was chosen since it is the most toxic metal and would indicate the hazard properties of the waste.

Rollins also used the code X910, a New Jersey DEP code, Willis said. "They (the NJDEP) say that's the wrong number, a non-hazardous number. We have New Jersey documents showing that's a hazardous waste number. 'Frankly, we are baffled,' Willis said.

Kopenhaver said, "How does a company as big as Rollins, experts in the environmental business, not know how to classify their waste? That's about all we have to say about it."

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