nd today. cerned about people at bus stops being blown in *tributed to this report.*

ritics hope new FEMA is as good as the old

ORY REISS

gton Bureau

Isabel could become FEMA's biggest challenge since it became part of the Department of Homeland Security.

SHINGTON – The names crossed a wall at the Federal Emergency gement Agency on Tuesday with Ana and ended with Henri. bel, the hurricane churning d the East Coast, was next in or a black mark that would show passed, too.

bel's mark on the East Coast, ver, was the question on the s of dozens of people in the A Emergency Operations r as they revved up for the – arranging the transfer of dis- response teams from Denver elsewhere and alerting urban n-and-rescue teams to get ready. bel could become FEMA's st challenge since it became part e Department of Homeland ity. That move h many coastal la officials who worr eparedness and r nadow FEMA's ery from natural d is will be a test ca announcement opportunity, I believe, to make hat we forge a continued strong nship with FEMA," said Rep. McIntyre, D-N.C., who repre- the hurricane-prone southeast- rt of his state.

ntyre voted to keep FEMA out department. But McIntyre, like people who shared his con- said FEMA so far has behaved ed. Since being folded into the tment this spring, FEMA has nated the recovery of debris he space shuttle Columbia and harrowing days responding to eds of midwestern storms.

've proven the mission is the ' said Michael Brown, under- ary of emergency prepared- or Homeland Security, as the ency operations center began r work on Isabel.

Isabel, which had weakened to gory 2 storm Tuesday from a us Category 5, represents the t threat FEMA has faced under w leadership, said William chief of the agency's incident se section.

eeting Tuesday morning that said was the first of its kind nt Homeland Security ary Tom Ridge face to face with 15 officials from states along antic Ocean. Ridge, flanked by dersecretaries, FEMA person- l officials from the Coast Guard her divisions, sat at a horse-shoe table and consulted with state emergency officials appearing by video on two large television screens.

"This is highly unusual," Clark said. "This is the new FEMA."

The new FEMA has been reorganized, but officials say it will be better than before. Those who depend on the agency to help them get back on their feet, however, will be the judges of that later.

"It may be a bit of a bellwether for the Department of Homeland Security in the overall coordination of efforts," said Brian Usher, head of an emergency ... mmittee ... Works ... orks ... a con- ... eeting ... nistra- ... orities under FEMA. Members of Congress didn't want to distract FEMA officials from Isabel by summoning them to Capitol Hill on Tuesday, but some were prepared to ask tough questions.

For example, a year ago communities hit by a storm like Isabel would get millions on top of their disaster recovery money for strengtheni problem infrastructure against t next disaster. This year, howev Congress cut those hazard mitigati grants in half, from 15 percent of t recovery money to 7.5 percent.

Bush had requested that change well as an increase in grants for p disaster preparation, arguing it ma more sense to prevent damage th respond to it. But communities co plain big storms, earthquakes a other disasters expose problems th they won't be able to fix with a scale back post-disaster grant program.

Document ID Number: 2241
AR: LA Regional Rest. Plan. Prog.
Title: Restoring Natural Resources After Oil Spills, September 18, 2003, ... [public announcement]

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GOVERNOR

Trustees Release Draft Regional Restoration Plan to Restore Injured Resources

State of Louisiana and Federal natural resource trustees are soliciting public comments on a draft Regional Restoration Plan to restore natural resources injured by oil spills. This draft Region 2 Plan is the first of nine regional plans to be developed under the statewide Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program.

The State of Louisiana, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and U.S. Department of the Interior have developed a statewide program to expedite restoration of injured resources and reduce the cost of Natural Resource Damage Assessments—the process by which trustee agencies assess and restore resources injured by oil spills.

Region 2 encompasses all or part of the following parishes: Ascension, Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist. The draft Plan describes the affected environment, biological resources, and associated habitat types, as well as the natural resources/services that are likely to be injured by an incident, appropriate restoration types for each of the potentially injured resources/services, and available restoration projects that have been identified to date. Another key feature of the draft Region 2 Plan is the determination of a representative unit cost to restore predominant habitat types in the region as part of a cash settlement. The proposed predominant habitat types in Region 2 are coastal herbaceous wetlands, oyster reefs, and coastal-forested wetlands.

For more information and/or to receive a copy of the draft Plan, please visit www.darp.noaa.gov or contact one of the following individuals:

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The draft Region 2 Plan will be released on or before September 23, 2003. Written comments should be submitted to William Conner by October 23, 2003, at the address listed above.