The Army Corps of Engineers began opening the floodgates at the London Avenue Canal Monday just after 8 a.m. after the Lake Pontchartrain water level subsided below 2.5 feet above sea level, according to corps spokeswoman Amanda Jones.

Easterly winds and heavy rain on Saturday caused the lake's water level to reach the operational trigger of 2.5 feet and rising, prompting the corps to close the gates and begin pumping, Jones said.

Previous procedures called for closing the gates when the lake level reached 4 feet and rising only during tropical events, she said.

Lowering that elevation and operating during nontropical events reduces the risk of exceeding the canal's safe water elevation, and also maximizes the New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board's pumping ability during heavy rainfall, Jones said.

A three-person team had been stationed at the structure throughout the weekend and was responsible for operating the gates and pumps from the control room, she said.

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition equipment enables the corps' emergency operations center to remotely monitor and operate the system as a redundancy in its operation plan, should the need arise, she said.

The corps' pumps have a maximum combined capacity of 5,200 cubic feet per second at the London Avenue Canal, she said, adding that the corps will continue to monitor rainfall and tides.