



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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DEQ initiates watershed inspection project in eastern St. Tammany Parish and Washington Parish

BATON ROUGE – Environmental scientists from the Southeast Regional Office of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality have commenced a widespread water quality inspection of the impaired watersheds within eastern St. Tammany Parish and Washington Parish.

DEQ is initiating a watershed-based approach across the state, which focuses on improving water quality in watersheds that are impaired for their designated use (such as fish, shellfish and/or wildlife propagation, agricultural support, drinking water consumption or recreational use through fishing, swimming or boating).

The goal of the project is to ensure that each facility discharging into the watersheds is doing so properly and in accordance with state and federal environmental regulations. The project has been successfully conducted at other watersheds within the state, including Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Terrebonne and the Tchefuncte River.

“Improper wastewater discharge is a leading cause of pollution to Louisiana’s waterways, so it is imperative that the state’s watersheds are protected from illegal and unpermitted discharges,” said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. “In order to maintain healthy watersheds that promote fish and wildlife propagation and support sporting and recreational activities, we must make certain that these areas are properly maintained and environmental laws are being followed.”

The project is designed to address the source(s) through a combination of surveillance inspections, enforcement actions, compliance assistance and community outreach programs. DEQ’s Inspections, Enforcement, Water Permits, Assessment and Drinking Water Protection Divisions will work together to identify all permitted and unpermitted facilities contributing pollutants into the targeted watershed. Once identified, all contributors to the watershed’s impairment will be required to comply with their permit or apply for a permit if they currently are operating without one. DEQ’s Small Business Assistance group will help qualified facilities with permit applications and initial compliance-related issues.

Facilities who contribute pollutants to the watershed will then be inspected to ensure for compliance. Facilities which fail to apply for a permit or fail to comply with applicable regulations will be referred to DEQ’s Enforcement Division for appropriate action.

The project will focus on watersheds which drain into the Pearl River or the Bogue Chitto; such as Peters Creek, Bogue Lusa Creek, Big Silver Creek, Little Silver Creek, Lawrence Creek, Bonner Creek and Thigpen Creek.