



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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### **DEQ commences Upper Bayou Terrebonne watershed initiative**

**BATON ROUGE** - The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality will conduct a watershed-based survey of the Upper Bayou Terrebonne in an effort to collect water discharge data. Starting in February, DEQ environmental scientists will visit facilities along Bayou Terrebonne from Thibodaux to the Inter Coastal Water Way in order to ensure that all facilities have current and appropriate water discharge permits. The project is being conducted in collaboration with the Upper Bayou Terrebonne Watershed Task Force.

The project is one of several being conducted by DEQ which focuses on watersheds within in the state that are deemed impaired based on water quality data. Impairment centers on the designated uses of surface waters, such as primary contact recreation (swimming and skiing), secondary contact recreation (fishing and boating), fish and wildlife propagation, drinking water use, oyster propagation, agricultural use and natural resources use.

The watershed-based approach is designed to address and identify impairment sources through a combination of surveillance inspections, enforcement actions, compliance assistance and community outreach programs. The inspection approach involves identifying all permitted and un-permitted facilities contributing pollutants into the targeted watershed so that all potential contributors to the watershed's impairment are discovered.

Unpermitted facilities will be required to apply for a permit, and DEQ's Small Business Assistance group will help qualified facilities with permit applications and initial compliance-related issues. Facilities failing to comply with permitting guidelines will be reviewed by DEQ for potential enforcement action.

"This project will be a comprehensive one, as DEQ continues to work with these facilities to ensure that they are in compliance," said Peggy Hatch, DEQ Secretary. "DEQ is proud of its partnership with the Bayou Terrebonne Watershed Task Force. We both want the same goal, which is to improve the waters of the state. We have data that shows the waters throughout the state continue to improve and it will take innovative techniques, such as these watershed surveys, to continue improvements."

Presently, the upper portion of Bayou Terrebonne is impaired due to insufficient dissolved oxygen levels and excessive levels of fecal coliform, nitrate/nitrite and phosphorus. Water quality testing performed in the region has shown that the predominant suspected sources of impairment are related to sewerage issues. DEQ's efforts will focus on unpermitted discharges of sewage from commercial facilities, as well as compliance evaluations from permitted facilities. The project is slated for completion by early summer.

Information on DEQ's water programs, along with water enforcement and water quality assessment can be found on the DEQ Web site at: <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/PROGRAMS/Water.aspx>.