



Four Good Reasons to Adopt a Drinking Water Protection Ordinance



A Drinking Water Protection Ordinance can have a large impact on maintaining the integrity of the parish's source of drinking water. The following supporting reasons exist:

- 1) According to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, fifteen percent of the state's population is served by community ground water systems that were ranked as having a high potential susceptibility to contamination by the Source Water Assessment Program. By prohibiting new potential sources of contamination from locating next to existing public supply wells, the ordinance prevents additional threats to the water supply from being added to those already existing. The lower the number of potential sources of contamination, the lower the risk.
- 2) There are a very few existing state regulations protecting drinking water wells from potential sources of contamination. Chapter 12 of the State Sanitary Code requires setback distances only for septic tanks, sewers, other water wells, landfills and ditches, and none of these distances are greater than 100 feet. The Louisiana Administrative Code Title 33, Part XI Underground Storage Tank Regulations require a 50-foot setback **only** if any portion of the UST system does not meet the release detection requirements for new systems. All existing systems were also required to meet these new requirements by December 22, 1998. Therefore, the 50-foot setback technically no longer applies.
- 3) Drinking water is easy to contaminate but difficult and expensive to clean up. The Town of Gilbert spent \$424,000 to connect to another water system and build a new wellfield when the town's sole source of drinking water was contaminated in 1992 by a leaking underground storage tank. The cost to assess and cleanup the contaminated site was in excess of one million dollars. Subsequently, an ordinance was passed unanimously to protect their new wellfield.
- 4) The Town of Winnsboro received \$3.1 million in direct loans and \$2.3 million in grants to replace an entire well field that was contaminated by a nearby gasoline storage site and infiltration - of salt into the water supply, according to the April 29, 2002 edition of *The News Star*.

The contamination incidents in Gilbert and Winnsboro are just two examples of many. Protection of public drinking water supplies is needed before contamination causes health, economic, and environmental consequences. Please help us to do our part in protecting your community's resource. Consider a drinking water protection ordinance for your community.

