



Department

PUBLIC HEALTH | DRINKING WATER

DHH Awards \$4.8 Million to the City of Leesville for Water System Improvements *Loan to fix city's water leaks will save Leesville money*

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BATON ROUGE, La.—

This month, the Department of Health and Hospitals' (DHH) Office of Public Health awarded \$4.8 million to the City of Leesville through the State's Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Program (DWRLF). The loan will help the system improve and update the community's drinking water system.

Assistant Secretary for Public Health, J.T. Lane said it's imperative that all Louisiana residents have access to safe drinking water. "This program gives local communities a source of dependable and affordable financing to bring their water treatment facilities up to the latest and most modern technology that keeps their residents safe and healthy."

"This money will greatly benefit our city by paying for water system improvements and providing assurance to our residents that we will always have one of our most precious resources, drinking water," said Leesville Mayor Robert Rose. "Water is a finite resource, and we need to know that as long as our city exists it has a reliable source of water."

Each month, the City of Leesville's aging water system loses close to 60 percent of the water it produces. The \$4.8 million is expected to help solve the city's water loss problem by paying to replace the system's water lines. The money will also provide much needed upgrades to Leesville's water treatment plants and rehabilitation of the system's existing water storage tanks.

Congress established State Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Programs in 1996 as part of the amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. The program is jointly funded by an annual grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (80 percent) and the individual participating states (20 percent). In Louisiana, it is administered by DHH's Office of Public Health. The Drinking Water Capitalization Grant allowed for additional subsidy in the form of principal forgiveness of up to 30 percent of the loan principal, with a cap of \$1,125,000 of principal forgiveness per project. Through this special provision, the DWRLF is providing principal forgiveness in the amount of \$1,250,000.

Loans made through this program are low interest and have a maximum 20-year repayment period. Both public and privately-owned community and nonprofit, non-community water systems are eligible to apply for loans.

Once a loan is approved, water systems can use the funds to make their improvements. As the systems pay back the loans, the principal and interest are used to make more money available for other communities that have drinking water needs. All loan projects are approved based upon a priority ranking system. Among other factors, projects that address the most serious risks to human health and those that ensure compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act are given the highest priority.

"These improvements assist the systems in complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act and protecting public health," said Jennifer Wilson, program manager for the State's Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund.

In the photo above, pictured from left to right: Dan MacDonald, Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Program Engineer; Robert Rose, Mayor of Leesville; Jake Causey, DHH Office of Public Health Chief Engineer; and Jennifer Wilson, Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Program Manager.

For more information about the program, contact Jennifer Wilson at DHH's Office of Public Health, 225-342-7499.

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