



Department

PUBLIC HEALTH | DRINKING WATER

DHH Awards \$5.5 million to St. John the Baptist Parish Waterworks Districts 1 and 2 for Water System Improvements

Loan to help improve system's reliability

Thursday, October 17, 2013 | Contact: Media & Communications: Phone: 225.342.1532, E-mail: dhhinfo@la.gov

BATON ROUGE, La.—The Department of Health and Hospitals' (DHH) Office of Public Health has awarded \$5.5 million to the St. John the Baptist Waterworks Districts 1 and 2 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."

"We are extremely excited to close on funding through the Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund which will go toward new filters and a water line under the river," said St. John the Baptist Parish President Natalie Robottom. "Both will create redundancy throughout the water system, while the parish takes advantage of 30 percent forgiveness of the loan's principal. This is an added value of the loan program that frees up parish funds for future projects."



The money will be used to implement several improvements to the Districts' aging drinking water systems. The improvements will take place in two phases. Phase one includes replacing valves at the system's elevated storage tanks, which will help maintain pressure in the system, adjustments and upgrades to the water intake structure at the Lions Pump Station, which will allow it to operate at full capacity year-round, and replacement of old filters at the Lions Treatment Plant to improve reliability and increase capacity. Phase 2, to be constructed at a later date, includes a water main beneath the Mississippi River to connect the Lions Water Treatment Plant on the east bank to the Edgard Water Treatment Plant on the west bank, which will provide a backup water supply to the west bank customers.

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 \$1,125,000.

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: Hugh Martin, Foley & Judell, St. John the Baptist Parish Bond Attorney; Rob Delaune, Digital Engineering, Consulting Engineer; Natalie Robottom, St. John the Baptist Parish President; Virgilio Rayneri, St. John the Baptist Parish Director of Utilities; Vince Lucia, St. John the Baptist Parish Chief Financial Officer; Jennifer Wilson, DWRLF Program Manager; David Wolf, Adams & Reese, DWRLF Bond Attorney.

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

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