



Public Health

DRINKING WATER

DHH Awards \$405,000 to Weston Water System, Inc. for Water System Improvements

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BATON ROUGE, La.—This summer, the Department of Health and Hospitals' Office of Public Health awarded \$405,000 to Weston Water System, Inc. through the State's Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Program (DWRLF). The loan will provide assistance to the system to install a new drinking water well.

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."

The money will be used to build a third water well at the Caney Lake booster station site. This project will help increase drinking water production to better serve the area's growing population. The Weston Water System is in Jackson Parish and currently serves approximately 1,350 people. Weston's growth rate is stable and steady and justifies the addition of an additional production well.

"We're excited about the opportunity to build for the future by bringing the Weston Water System into the 21st century," said Weston Water System President A.E. "Sonny" Stephens. "We're grateful for the low interest loan which makes this project possible and affordable."

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 FY 2012 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 will provide additional subsidization in the form of principal forgiveness in the amount of \$121,500.

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.

"The purpose of the fund is to provide states with a financial mechanism to make below market rate loans to drinking water systems for infrastructure improvements. These improvements assist the systems in complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act and protecting public health," said Jennifer Wilson, program manager for the Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund.

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

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