

Department

DRINKING WATER

DHH Awards \$255,000 to Town of Bernice for Water System Improvements

Thursday, March 5, 2015 | **Contact:** Media & Communications: Phone: 225.342.1532, E-mail: dhinfo@la.gov

Baton Rouge, La. —The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) awarded a \$255,000 loan to the town of Bernice through the State's Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund (DWRLF). The low-interest subsidized loan will help improve the community's drinking water system.

DHH Assistant Secretary for Public Health, J.T. Lane, said it's imperative that all Louisiana residents have access to safe drinking water, an essential function of public health. "The DWRLF 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 in order to keep residents safe and healthy."

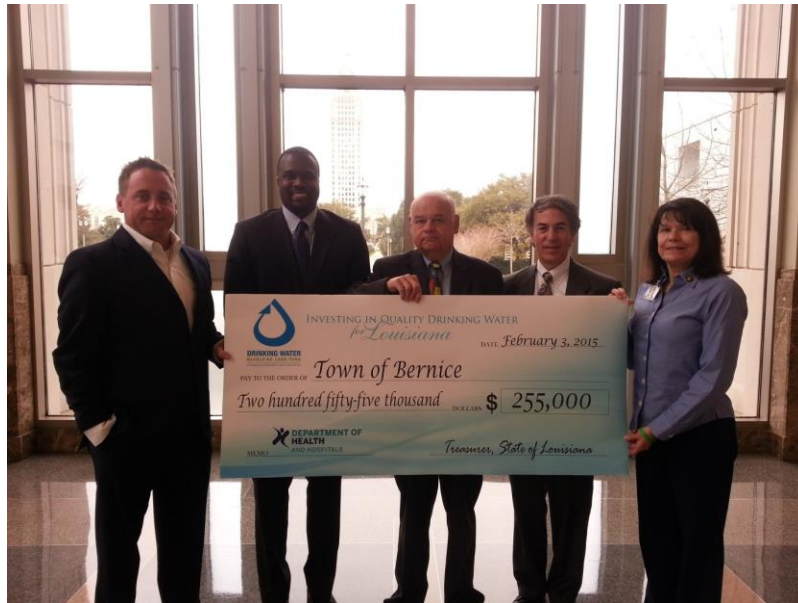
The town of Bernice and DHH officials closed the loan on Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2015. DWRLF funding will be used for the repairing, upgrading and repainting of two elevated water storage tanks. The repairs and repainting are necessary to bring the system into compliance with the Louisiana Sanitary Code. Additional upgrades include changing the way the system communicates with itself to cellular technology which will result in a savings of over \$600 per month and the additional ability to notify the water system operator of emergency situations. The total project cost is \$505,000, so the system is also using a \$250,000 grant from the Delta Regional Authority to pay for the remainder of the project.

"Having worked in parish and local government for nearly 40 years, I have never encountered a Department as professional, detailed, punctual and supportive as the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and the Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund," said Bernice Mayor William Mitcham. "With the low-interest loan from DWRLF and a grant from Delta Regional Authority, we will soon be able complete the DHH and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated improvements to our elevated water storage tanks without raising water rates to our customers in the town of Bernice. I commend and extend the town's deep appreciation to Jennifer Wilson and Dan McDonald of DHH; Bonding Attorneys Bill Boles and David Wolf; Doyle Robinson of Delta Regional Authority, Gov. Bobby Jindal and engineer Bob Myers with Ron Riley Company of Louisiana, Inc."

Congress established the 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 EPA (80 percent) and the individual participating states (20 percent). In Louisiana, it is administered by DHH's Office of Public Health. Loans made through this program are low interest and have a maximum 20-year repayment period. 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 secure 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.



In the photo above, pictured from left to right: Dan MacDonald, LDHH/OPH DWRLF Program Engineer; James Moffett, III, Adams and Reese, LLP, DHH Counsel; Mayor William Mitcham, Town of Bernice; David Wolf, Adams and Reese, LLP, DHH Counsel; Jennifer Wilson, LDHH/OPH DWRLF Program Manager.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals strives to protect and promote health statewide and to ensure access to medical, preventive and rehabilitative services for all state citizens. To learn more about DHH, visit www.dhh.louisiana.gov. For up-to-date health information, news and emergency updates, follow DHH's [Twitter](#) account and [Facebook](#).