

Department

PUBLIC HEALTH | DRINKING WATER

DHH Awards \$1.25 million to French Settlement Water Company for 2014 Emergency Connection Projects

Thursday, January 8, 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 \$1.25 million loan to the French Settlement Water Company through the State's Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund Program (DWRLF). The low-interest 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, a foundational 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 that keeps residents safe and healthy."

French Settlement Water Company and DHH officials closed on the loan Thursday, December 4, 2014. DWRLF funding will be used to consolidate Black Cat, Velma and Bankston water systems with Hammond Heights. Several 6" PVC waterlines are proposed to connect these systems that are in close proximity to one another. The second part of this project will replace some asbestos cement water lines located in the French Settlement water system. This section of the project will also replace one of the wells in the French Settlement water system as well as consolidate the Colyell Home Sites system with the French Settlement water system.

"We're excited about the opportunity for the future by bringing the water systems into the 21st century," said French Settlement Water Company President Billy Edrington. "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. 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. 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 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.

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](#).