

A Brief Summary of Water Supply in the State of Louisiana

Timothy W. Duex

Department of Geology, The University of Louisiana at Lafayette, P.O. Box 44530, Lafayette, LA 70504-4530

ABSTRACT

Recently there have been concerns raised about water supply in Louisiana because of the opening of new power plants and new instances of contamination. Total water withdrawals increased from 5,416 million gallons per day (mgd) in 1960 to 10,310 mgd in 2000, with an intermediate peak in 1975 of 11,730 mgd. During the same time frame, population increased from 3.26 million to 4.47 million with a slight decrease from 1985 to 1990. Historical trends show fluctuations in water usage due to population and economic changes. Both increased from 1960 to 1980, then went down for about a decade, and have gradually recovered after 1990. During the 40-year time interval, surface-water usage increased from 4,390 mgd to 8,700 mgd (up 97%) whereas ground-water usage increased from 1,030 mgd to 1,610 mgd (up 54%). It appears likely that water demand will increase in the future.

In addition, there are a number of concerns about water quality in the state. Surface-water concerns include 19 parishes that have mercury contaminant advisories and other areas that have persistent toxins like PCBs, chlordane, dioxins, and DDT. Ground-water concerns include a variety of potential pollution sites such as the following: over 160,000 oil wells, more than 29,000 "non-hazardous waste pits," 14,491 monitoring wells, 1,775 recovery wells, 964 underground storage tanks, 631 "Superfund" sites, and 283 solid-waste disposal sites. State, federal, and local agencies have provided a protective network to assure water supply to the residents of our state.