

A Brief Summary of Water Supply in Louisiana

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Abstract

The increased demand for water and instances of contamination have raised concerns about water supply in Louisiana. The overall usage of water has increased in a trend related to the population increase in Louisiana. In spite of the fact that Louisiana is a water rich state, there are instances of water supply problems in the state. Total water withdrawals in Louisiana increased from 5,416 million gallon per day in 1960 to 10,310 million gallon per day in 2000 with an intermediate peak in 1975 of 11,730 million gallon per day. Over the same time frame, population increased from 3.26 million to 4.47 million with a slight decrease from 1985 to 1990. Surface water usage increases from 4.39 million gallon per day to 8.70 million gallon per day (98% increase) whereas ground water increases from 1.03 million gallon per day to 1.61 million gallon per day (56% increase). It seems apparent that water demand will continue to increase in the future.

There are a number of concerns about water quality in the state. Surface water concerns include heavy metals like mercury and persistent toxins like PCBs, chlordane, dioxins, and DDT. Ground water concerns include a variety of potential pollution sites that include 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. Because of these threats, continued monitoring of water supplies is necessary to assure an adequate water supply for residents of our state.