



DEQ receives EPA grant for water quality efforts

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality recently received final approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to fund a comprehensive water quality characterization effort that will take place in streams across the state. The grant from the EPA, in the amount of \$505,975, will support DEQ's data collection efforts as outlined in DEQ's Quality Assurance Project Plan. The plan summarizes DEQ's effort to gather field water quality, nutrient, algae, habitat, macroinvertebrate and fish community data to support evaluation of nutrient levels that are protective of aquatic species in the state.

The 3-year plan will focus on five ecoregions of the state, including portions of the upper Mississippi alluvial plain (in the northeast corner of Louisiana) and the south central plains (middle to western portion of the state, and bisected by the Red River). Several locations have been surveyed in order to obtain the 60 key sites needed for the data collection effort. Sites must meet selection criteria outlined in the plan, and vary from remote and small in size, to larger, more accessible waterways. Some of the sites visited so far include Little Silver Creek in Washington Parish; Marsh Bayou in Jefferson Davis Parish; Tangipahoa River at Arcola; the Tensas River near Clayton in Concordia Parish; and Whiskey Chitto Creek in Allen Parish.

The overall process, which is based on EPA guidance, includes the analysis of existing water quality and biological data as well as a review of previous studies on nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, in wadeable Louisiana waterbodies. The funding supports Clean Water Act objectives that focus on evaluating the impacts of nutrient levels on aquatic life. The project is being undertaken through the partnership of several DEQ divisions, including the Office of Environmental Compliance Inspection and Assessment Divisions and the Office of Environmental Services Water Permits Division. Scientists in the Surveys Section of the Assessment Division have been the "boots on the ground" during the study site selection process. In addition, technical staff from the U.S. EPA headquarters and regional offices worked with DEQ on planning the project, and U.S. Geological Survey will be working with DEQ on new biological sampling protocols.

"This funding will greatly assist DEQ in its ongoing mission to protect aquatic life in and around the bayous, rivers, lakes, tributaries and streams in Louisiana," said Mitch Mitchell, Administrator of DEQ's Water Permits Division. "In addition, this effort will serve as a highly beneficial training platform for DEQ, as well as a team-building model as we collaborate with the U.S. Geological Survey on the insect sampling and attached algae sampling components of the project."

Other efforts at DEQ will also focus on activities that support the development of practical nutrient levels which are protective of designated uses; particularly aquatic life protection. This information is critical for the development of implementation tools that may be used for water quality assessments, Total Maximum Daily Load calculations, permitting information and other control strategies such as nonpoint source pollution best management practices. DEQ environmental scientists will also conduct community outreach as part of their effort to inform citizens, sportsmen and business owners on the reduction of nutrients pollution from point sources.



DEQ environmental scientists train on collecting fish for sampling



DEQ environmental scientists pull a net in order to collect fish for sampling