

The logo for shreveporttimes.com, featuring the text "shreveporttimes.com" in a white, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow, set against a dark blue rectangular background.

October 13, 2009

Water source reporting required of oil and gas operators

By Vickie Welborn
vwelborn@gannett.com

Effective this month, the state conservation office will enforce a new requirement for reporting water sources utilized by oil and gas companies for hydraulic fracturing operations.

The policy is in response to the intense development of the Haynesville Shale natural gas formation in northwest Louisiana. The reporting requirement is part of the Office of Conservation's efforts to ensure the balance between preserving the state's natural resources while allowing responsible development, Commissioner James Welsh said.

"We want to make sure we have the best information possible on how our resources are being used to help us make the best policy decisions in regulating industry and protecting the public now and in the future," Welsh said in a prepared statement.

Water quickly emerged as a primary concern in conjunction with the Haynesville Shale development explosion, as area residents feared competition with the delicate aquifers that are major private water suppliers. Approximately 3 million to 4 million gallons of water are needed per well to fracture the underground formation so the natural gas can be extracted.

A big push has been under way for months to shift the oil and gas companies to surface water sources. And officials involved with water conservation efforts believe the overall attention to the water worries is working. A majority of the companies are utilizing water sources such as rivers, lakes and ponds.

The industry, Welsh said, already is responding to the new reporting requirement — made enforceable Oct. 1 — that calls for either the water well number or water body name from which their water is drawn to be identified. Volumes of water used also must be cited.

"While we already have procedures in place to track the number and use of water wells in the state, increasing the amount of data available to the Office of Conservation's Ground Water Resources Program increases the ability to appropriately manage resources," said state Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Angelle, who also chairs the state Ground Water Resources Commission.

The Ground Water Resources Program, within the Office of Conservation, has started work on collecting the information received through the new reporting requirement and is preparing methods of analysis to make the best use of the data.

Along those lines, a separate effort is being initiated in Bossier, Caddo and DeSoto parishes to study any impact drilling and hydrofracing will have on potable water sources. The LSUS Red River Watershed Management Institute and LSUS Louisiana Geological Survey have proposed a two-year examination of 1,000 to 1,200 domestic wells in the southern half of Caddo, southern third of Bossier and northern half of DeSoto parishes that are in the heart of the drilling activity.

The proposal, which comes with a \$250,000 price tag split among the three parishes, calls for samples to be taken of the wells at no costs to the citizens after permission is given for access. Water levels and quality would be studied, and the results will be shared with well owners.

Attention would be paid to wells mainly completed in the Carrizo-Wilcox and Red River Alluvial aquifers and some samples from the Sparta and Upland Terrance aquifers. Samples will be analyzed for 26 chemicals. The last study that considered water quality in northwest Louisiana was in the early

1990s.

Gary Hanson, executive director for the institute, made the pitch Monday night to the DeSoto Parish Police Jury. Contact already has been made with Caddo and Bossier governing officials. None have signed off on the project but interest has been expressed. Most are considering the idea in the 2010 budgeting process.

Additional Facts

[Learn more](#)

More information on the Louisiana Office of Conservation's new reporting requirement can be found at www.dnr.louisiana.gov.
