



# Capital Area Ground Water Conservation District



## Watching out for A Treasured Earth Resource

*Dedicated to the conservation, orderly development and protection of quality of ground water in the Capital Area*

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## USGS Consolidates Southeast Region Water Science Centers

On October 1, 2014, the U.S. Geological Survey Southeast Region consolidated its Water Science Centers to minimize costs and provide opportunities for expanded scientific expertise to assist with local questions about water resources

The Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee Water Science Centers became the Lower Mississippi Gulf Water Science Center led by W. Scott Gain based in Nashville, Tennessee. The Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina Water Science Centers became the South Atlantic Water Science Center led by Eric Strom based in Columbia, South Carolina. The Caribbean-Florida Water Science Center was previously consolidated, and is led by Rafael "Willie" Rodriguez based in Lutz, Florida. The new center directors and their staff will work with cooperators in the development of cooperative agreements, memorandums of understanding, and memorandums of agreement.

Although leadership may have changed, we will still be seeing some of the same faces and will have the same access to USGS scientists, data, and cooperative funding. Each state will continue to have an active USGS presence in support of the research and monitoring throughout the southeast. With these consolidations, USGS will be better able to meet our needs and address large-scale regional water issues, and improve the management of the stream gaging network in the Southeast Region.



## USGS Progressing with Groundwater Modeling

The USGS report documenting the revised groundwater model and future pumping scenarios in the "1,200-foot" and "2,000-foot" sands has been completed and submitted for peer review by groundwater modelers in Arkansas and Tennessee. The peer review comments have been received and are being addressed. The title of the report is, "Simulation of groundwater flow and salt transport in the "1,200-foot" sand with scenarios to mitigate saltwater migration in the "2,000-foot" sand in the Baton Rouge area, Louisiana."

Work continues to refine the hydrologic structure used in the model. The depths to tops and bottoms of sands have been recorded from about 150 geophysical logs in the Baton Rouge area. The tops and bottoms of major aquifers have been assigned to the log picks and preliminary contouring of the data has been done to identify problem areas.

At its December 2, 2014 meeting the Commission voted to alter the modeling schedule for the next phase of the interagency agreement with USGS. The next phase will be to combine the "2,400-foot" and "2,800-foot" sands for modeling purposes. This could result in a time savings.

## Office of Conservation Groundwater Survey Results

By Matt Reonas, Louisiana Office of Conservation

As part of its continuing "Water-Wise in BR" campaign—supported through a field of interest fund of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation—the Office of Conservation commissioned a 1000-response telephone survey in September 2014 to gauge knowledge and perceptions about the Southern Hills Aquifer System and the use and management of groundwater in East Baton Rouge Parish (EBR). A previous survey conducted in December 2012 helped set a baseline for general knowledge about the subject and undergirded the initial educational activities of the agency. The recent survey provides additional insight into public awareness about local groundwater issues.

Knowledge about the source of "drinking water" in EBR appears to be relatively strong, with 78% of respondents in the September 2014 survey acknowledging "below-ground aquifers, or 'groundwater'" as the primary source of supply for the parish. This is a substantial increase in recognition from December 2012, when only 52% of respondents registered groundwater as the source of water found in EBR homes and businesses. The reasons for such a dramatic, 26-point jump are multiple. The 2014 survey drew from a significantly older demographic, one probably more knowledgeable about water, public works, and infrastructure issues to begin with, as well as being more attuned to traditional print, radio, and/or TV media sources (rather than newer social media or internet-based news services). Groundwater use and management in EBR has been a subject of considerable traditional media coverage (along with educational awareness efforts including "Water-Wise in BR") in the two years since the original survey. In fact, 43% of respondents admitted to having heard reference to EBR's "drinking water" in such traditional, local media sources over the past year. A survey with a younger demographic, perhaps less informed or drawing news from different sources, might have skewed the recognition of groundwater's importance in EBR in the other direction.

Even among what we may consider to be a more informed cohort represented by this survey, specific knowledge about the source, use, and management of groundwater in EBR appears to be very limited. Among the respondents, 85% acknowledged that they had never heard of the term "Southern Hills Aquifer System" and only 43%—less than half—correctly identified the fact that "more than 75%" of the water used in homes and businesses in EBR comes from "below-ground aquifers." In fact, more than 31% of respondents thought groundwater contributed less than half of the total amount of water consumed annually in these places. The actual amount is, of course, 100%.

As to management issues and challenges, two-thirds of respondents admitted that they had not "seen, read, or heard" any reference to saltwater intrusion in EBR over the past year, and roughly a third had never heard of saltwater intrusion at all. Of those that had, some 37% believed it to be "not a threat at all" or "not a big threat." Further, more than 67% indicated that they had not heard of "any measures being taken to prevent the threat of saltwater intrusion." Only 9% were aware of the installation of the Baton Rouge Water Works Company's "scavenger well," and just over 10% knew of efforts to model saltwater intrusion in Baton Rouge area aquifers.

Significantly for the Capital Area Ground Water Conservation Commission (CAGWCC), 49% of respondents said they would "most trust" a "special commission or task force" composed of city/parish and state government leaders, along with

representatives of business and industry, to “manage any serious threats to groundwater resources” in EBR. This was a nearly 14-point increase from the 2012 survey. Trust in city/parish leaders fell by about eight points (24% to 16%) between the two surveys, and in state government agencies, about two points (23% to 21%); support for the involvement of business and industry leaders increased by about six points (8% to 14%). Despite near majority support for a “special commission or task force” to manage threats to EBR’s groundwater, three-quarters of the respondents were not aware at all of the existence of the CAGWCC (charged with local groundwater management responsibilities), while 52%—more than half—had heard of the Office of Conservation (charged with statewide groundwater management responsibilities, as well as the regulation of oil and gas development).

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## **Water Institute of the Gulf Releases “Into the Blue 2050” Summary Brochure**

Baton Rouge and the Capital Region possess a tremendous environmental and economic asset in our freshwater resources. If we act now in a collaborative effort, grounded in wise and thoughtful planning, we can increase the value of these assets to realize their full potential for contributing to our quality of life, economic wellbeing, and overall prosperity. This pursuit was the justification for empaneling the Into the Blue 2050 Focus Group. On October 1, 2014, led by the Environment & Health Council of Louisiana (E&HCL) and The Water Institute of the Gulf (The Water Institute), a focus group of nearly forty community leaders from across the Capital Region convened to hone this vision, and develop principles and objectives that would catalyze and guide this initiative to better capitalize on the region’s significant water assets. The summary encapsulates the fundamental elements of Into the Blue 2050 that resulted from the focus group, and can be referenced for both guidance and inspiration in the design of future projects, studies, and innovations that stem from this effort.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Value	The Capital Region’s water resources have economic, recreational, environmental and social value that far exceeds their monetary value.
Identity	From the Mighty Mississippi to one of the nation’s best aquifer systems, the Capital Region’s water resources are integral to our identity and must be embraced and promoted.
Responsibility	To capitalize on and sustain the value offered by the region’s water assets for generations to come, as individuals and organizations we must realize what we have and be vigilant stewards of these uniquely valuable resources.
Education	Informing the public and key stakeholders about the opportunities and challenges involved in how we utilize our water resources and how our actions can affect their quantity and quality is fundamental to building momentum.
Leadership	To make a real impact, the effort to embrace and nurture water-related opportunities must be adopted and championed by community and political leaders and decision makers.
Decisions	Management of our water resources should be based on sound science and government policies, incorporating broad stakeholder input and acceptance.
Adaptation	Just like water, strategies related to capitalizing on our water resources must be fluid — capable of evolving as circumstances change.



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