

BLUE PAPERS

Louisiana Environmental Assets

The abundance and diversity of Louisiana's natural resources is a national treasure: biodiversity, water, fertile Delta lands, coastal marshes, oil and gas deposits, semi tropical climate, fresh water fisheries, marine fisheries, a Gulf coast. These resources have brought great wealth to many segments of Louisiana's population as well as to industries which have located in our state precisely because of the wealth that could be extracted.

From early days, Louisiana politics have encouraged a colonial approach to the State's resources. The results are pollution, over-consumption, contamination, depletion of precious natural resources. Frequently when resources are abused, people are abused. Abuse of the State's resources is directly related to poor health, poor education and low wages, all contributing to the fact that one fifth of Louisiana's people live in poverty making it the poorest state in the nation. Louisiana has the greatest income disparity between its wealthiest and its poorest residents.

What Needs to be Done:

- State commitment to cleaning up sources of pollution having a devastating effect on human health is urgent.
- Remove politics from the environmental decision making process. Base decisions on technical aspects. Create a level playing field for long term stewardship of our resources.
- Industrial tax exemptions and associated incentives must be tied to environmental compliance. If not, we are giving tax breaks which encourage industrial facilities to pollute the air, land and water.
- Non-point source runoff is the major cause of water pollution in the State. Agricultural runoff is one source of non-point runoff. Programs must be implemented to address non-point sources of pollution.
- All rivers, lakes and streams in the state must be cleaned up to the point that the water quality meets its designated uses.
- The Dead Zone in the Gulf along the coast of Louisiana should be remedied.
- Contaminants in waters and sediments impacting the state's fishery resources must be abated.
- Ground water resources must be protected from potential and existing sources of contamination.
- All areas of the state should be in attainment for air quality.
- All point sources of discharges (water and air) must be brought into compliance with their permit limits.
- The state must have adequate resources to enforce the environmental laws and regulations.