

CLAIBORNE WATERS

Water is central to Claiborne Parish's economy and will help determine the parish's future. Fortunately, the parish is rich in water resources.

What are the Watersheds of Claiborne Parish?

The Environmental Protection Agency has divided the nation into designated watersheds. Ridges (shown as dotted lines on Figure 1) separate three watersheds of which Claiborne Parish is a part. On the west is the Loggy Bayou watershed, with its streams draining into the Dorcheat, a part of the Red River Basin. To the south is the Black Lake Bayou watershed, also part of the Red River Basin. The majority of the parish is within the Bayou D'Arbonne watershed, which is part of the Ouachita River Basin. The Bayou D'Arbonne watershed includes Corney and Claiborne lakes and Middlefork, which lies between the two lakes.

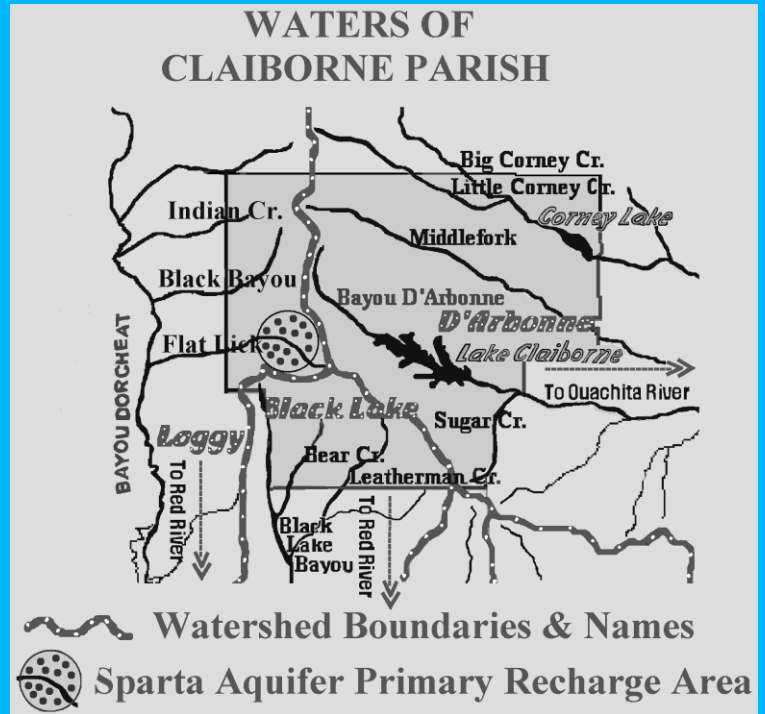


Figure 1

Can We Control the Quality of These Waters?

Claiborne is fortunate because most of its waters originate in the parish. This gives citizens control over the quality of their water, whereas parishes downstream depend on citizens of Claiborne to protect the water that flows to them.

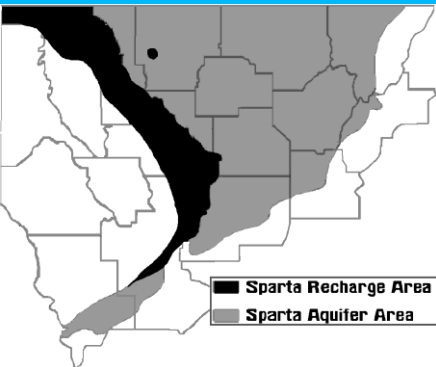


Figure 2 (U.S. Geological Survey)

What About the Quality of Our Drinking Water?

Claiborne Parish is also fortunate to lie over the Sparta Aquifer (Figure 2). Thus, citizens have access to quality drinking water that may be hundreds of years old, dating to a time well before the introduction of chemicals that pollute many rivers and lakes. Aquifer water is purified by nature, in contrast to lake or river water, which must be purified by man at higher cost and sometimes with poorer quality.

Because of those very advantages, aquifer water has been used at a faster rate than nature can replenish. Figure 3 shows areas of the Sparta Aquifer with water level below the aquifer's top (much of Claiborne Parish) and areas with drawdown (rate of water level drop) greater than one foot per year. Conservation efforts are ongoing

throughout the Sparta region, and surface water alternatives are being developed to reverse the decline.

Information about parish water resources and what you can do to help is available at the Police Jury office and at the LSU AgCenter Extension Service Office in the Police Jury Building. Contact information is also there.

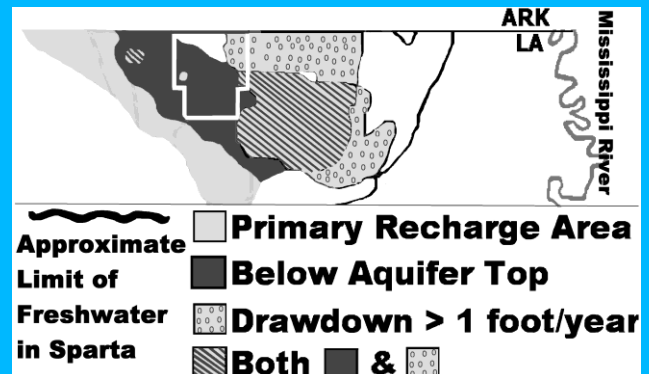


Figure 3

(Sparta Aquifer Study for the Sparta Groundwater Conservation District by Meyer, Meyer, LaCroix, & Hixson, Inc., 2002)

PROTECTING OUR WATER RESOURCES

“We depend on each other to protect and develop parish waters for future generations.”

Waters provide a place of rest, recreation, drinking water, wildlife habitats, crop irrigation, power generation, tourism, and flood protection. The amount of the Earth’s water that can be used for these purposes is fixed, so it’s no surprise that as demand for water increases worldwide, water’s value grows.

Water is valuable only when it is protected and developed. Healthy water lowers the cost of drinking water treatment, attracts tourists, and improves the value of lakeside property. Well maintained and protected wildlife habitat areas attract birds and animals that add to the appeal. Economic benefits flow to communities, helping finance good schools, roads, police protection, and other public services.

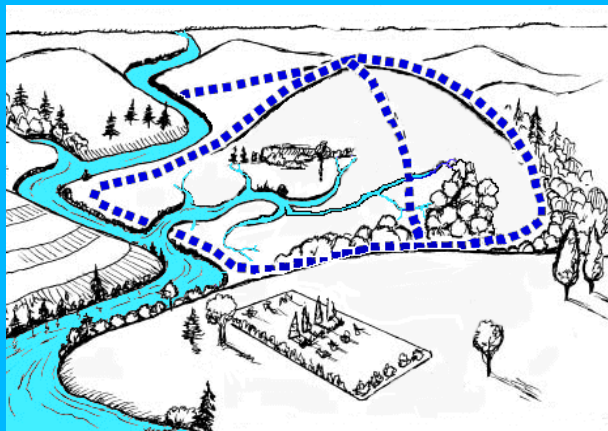


Diagram of a Watershed

A watershed is an area of land where water drains to a common waterway. Everyone lives in a watershed, and everything people do can affect our watersheds and associated rivers, lakes, and underground water.

Rivers, lakes, and underground water are reflections of an area’s watershed and the everyday actions that take place on the watershed. If waters suffer from algal scum, fish kills, or filling in with sediments, often the cause is a source within the watershed..

Leading threats to water quality are:

- 1) too many nutrients running off into waters, leading to excessive plant growth, which depletes oxygen supplies for fish and some other aquatic life,
- 2) decaying vegetation matter, which also depletes oxygen,
- 3) sediment, or "runoff" soil, that can fill water bodies, destroying habitat for plants and animals, as well as clogging fish gills and smothering fish eggs, and
- 4) metals such as mercury, chemicals such as PCBs, and bacteria that contaminate fish and shellfish.

“Point source pollution” comes from a specific activity, such as a factory process. Most such activities are regulated to minimize pollution.

It’s often the smaller scale activities (“non-point source pollution”) that can be the most detrimental to our for example:

- 1) leaking septic tanks,
- 2) using nutrient-rich phosphorous-containing detergents,
- 3) overfertilizing lawns,
- 4) clearing vegetation along a shoreline,
- 5) using powerful outboard motors in shallow areas,
- 6) poorly maintained boat engines that leak oil and grease into water bodies,
- 7) discarding herbicides and household hazardous wastes near shallow groundwater, which ends up in springs or streams.

Each person’s practices make a difference.