

Abstract

The Teche-Vermilion Blue Thumb Project was designed to raise the awareness of the people within the Vermilion-Teche Basin about nonpoint source pollutants and the steps that they could take at their homes or within their communities to reduce the level of these pollutants entering the bayous. The Vermilion River and Bayou Teche were both listed on the 303(d) list and have had total maximum daily loads developed for them. The types of pollutants that contribute to the nonpoint source loads within these water bodies are sediments, nutrients, fecal coliform bacteria and organic material. In order to restore these water bodies to their fishable and swimmable goals, there will need to be more progress made on reducing nonpoint source pollutants.

The Acadiana Resource Conservation and Development District entered into a cooperative agreement with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) to implement a the Blue Thumb Program, which focused on education and outreach, volunteer monitoring on the local water bodies, home sewage educational workshops and storm drain marking in urban areas. The Volunteer Monitoring Program included 9 schools and 356 students that monitored the water quality at 7 sites along Bayou Teche and 3 sites along Bayou Vermilion. One of the most popular educational tools was the Enviroscope Watershed Demonstration Model, which was utilized in 58 different schools to educate 2092 school children on watershed management and nonpoint source pollution. Home sewage educational workshops were also held throughout the project area, with 86 people from 9 parishes attending to learn more about what could be done to reduce the amount of pollution from home sewage systems. The Home Sewage Toolbox was another educational tool for local parishes to provide information to the public on how to reduce pollution from their home sewage system. Approximately 60 toolboxes were produced for distribution by Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Department of Health and Hospitals. Each toolbox contained guidance on how to organize a home sewer workshop. The Storm Drain Marking Program involved 127 people of all ages in Lafayette, Iberia, and St. Mary parishes, with over 257 storm drains marked with the message, "No Dumping, Drains to Bayou". The Blue Thumb website and traveling display were also popular and effective methods to educate the public about nonpoint source pollutants. The Blue Thumb website received over 1000 hits between July 2001 and November 2002. This program was considered to be a successful method to raise the awareness of the local people about what nonpoint source pollution is and what actions can be taken to reduce it.