

STATE OF LOUISIANA
GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

IN RE: APPLICATION OF * VOLUME I OF III
SPARTA GROUNDWATER * DOCKET NO. GWMC 02-0001
CRITICAL AREA *
DESIGNATION *

REPORT OF HEARING
HELD AT
RUSTON, LOUISIANA
NOVEMBER 19, 2002

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IN RE: APPLICATION OF *
SPARTA GROUNDWATER * DOCKET NO. GWMC 02-0001
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Report of the hearing of the Ground Water
Management Commission, State of Louisiana, on November
19, 2002, in Ruston, Louisiana.

COMMISSION MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Karen Gautreaux, Chairman
Phil Boudreaux, Department of Natural Resources
Steve Chustz, DEQ
Michael Taylor, DED
John Roussel, Assistant Secretary Wildlife & Fisheries
Linda Zaunbrecher, Farm Bureau Member
Dean Lowe, Department of Health and Hospitals

1 APPEARANCES:

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3 Ralph Hock, Webster Parish Water Advisory Board

4 Mike Walsworth, State Representative, District 15

5 Tommy Chatham, Jackson Parish Watershed District

6 Todd Culpepper, Jackson Parish Police Jury

7 Gary Carlisle, Sparta Commission Member

8 Jack Beard, Lincoln Parish Police Jury

9 Robert Reynolds, Union County Water Conservation Board

10 Jackie Reppond, Sparta Board, Industry

11 Jim Fannin, Jackson Parish Cattlemen

12 Robert Greer, Jackson Parish Watershed

13 Wade Meade, Department of History, Louisiana Tech

14 Robert Moore, President Jackson Parish Farm Bureau

15 Rick Godley

16 John C. Broussard, International Representative PACE

17 Olevia C. McDonald, Stone Container Corporation

18 Bridger DeVille

19 Charles H. Johnston, Cattlemen

20 Doug Davidson, Farm Bureau

21 Jim Lee

22 Travis Tinsley, Claiborne and Webster Parishes

23 James Michael

24 T. E. Gene Coleman, Claiborne Parish Police Jury

25 Robin Bridges, Webster Water Alliance

26 William Daniel, State Representative, District 68

27 George Jacob, Bienville Parish Police Jury

28 Jane Stephenson, League of Women Voters

29 Bobby E. Price, City of Ruston

30 Sarah Lindblad, GAGE

1 APPEARANCES (cont'd):

2 Patricia Jones, GAGE

3 John Van Bennett, Union Cattlemen Association, Inc.

4 John Hays

5 J. E. Mitcham

6 Cliff Arrington

7 Paul Washington

8 Reggie G. Skains, Mayor Downsville

9 Ed L. Aston

10 John L. Emory

11 Albert G. Hulett, Jackson Parish Watershed District

12 Edward L. Lee, 7122 D'Arbonne Water

13 Bill Jones, Senator, District 35

14 Dennis Woodward

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1 DOCKET NO. GWMC 02-0001

2 CRITICAL AREA DESIGNATION OF THE SPARTA AQUIFER

3 NOVEMBER 19, 2001

4 * * * * *

5 COMMISSIONER GAUTREAUX:

6 My name is Karen Gautreaux, Chairman of the
7 Louisiana Ground Water Management Commission. I'd
8 like to first ask the other Commissioners who are here
9 with me today to introduce themselves, then I'll make
10 some brief remarks. We'll start on Linda's end,
11 Linda?

12 COMMISSIONER ZAUNBRECHER:

13 I'm Linda Zaunbrecher, I represent Louisiana Farm
14 Bureau.

15 COMMISSIONER LOWE:

16 I'm Dean Lowe. I represent Department of Health
17 and Hospitals.

18 COMMISSIONER CHUSTZ:

19 I'm Steve Chustz with the Department of
20 Environmental Quality.

21 COMMISSIONER BOUDREAUX:

22 I'm Phil Boudreaux with the Department of Natural
23 Resources.

24 COMMISSIONER ROUSSEL:

25 John Roussel, Assistant Secretary, Department of
26 Wildlife and Fisheries.

27 COMMISSIONER GAUTREAUX:

28 Thank you. I just want to give you a little
29 background. This commission was formed after the 2001
30 Legislative Session by Act 446, which was referred to

1 as the Louisiana Groundwater Management Act. And the
2 legislation followed after the deliberations and
3 recommendations of the Governor's advisory task force,
4 water policy advisory task force, which recommended
5 both short- and long-term measures for the management
6 of water in Louisiana so that we could manage it in a
7 sustainable fashion.

8 The commission has two primary charges, one is a
9 longer term charge in the development of a statewide
10 comprehensive management plan, which must be submitted
11 to our House and State Senate environment committees
12 by December 31st of this year; and, also, to protect
13 the sustainability of Louisiana's aquifers, primarily
14 through the designation of critical groundwater areas,
15 and managing the groundwater resources within those
16 areas once they're designated. The commission has
17 several other responsibilities, it's on the website,
18 which we'll give you an address to go to if you'd like
19 to read the actual act, you're very welcome to do so,
20 and I encourage you to do so.

21 Today we're here because the Sparta Groundwater
22 Conservation District Commission has submitted an
23 application for areas within the Sparta aquifer to be
24 designated as critical groundwater areas, and
25 according to the application for a critical
26 groundwater area, by the procedure by which it's
27 designated, and that was established, the procedure
28 was established by commission rule, the commission
29 must hold a public hearing within the area proposed to
30 be designated as a critical groundwater area. So

1 that's why we're here tonight. You're going to hear
2 more about the procedural details from staff as we go
3 on, they'll go into the particulars, but I just wanted
4 to give you a little overview.

5 Tonight is an extremely important opportunity to
6 both learn more about what is being proposed in the
7 actual application, as well as having an opportunity
8 to offer your questions and comments on the matter, on
9 the application. And the commission and staff will
10 incorporate this information presented today, as well
11 as comments received during the comment period that
12 will follow, and we'll consider that as we deliberate
13 on the application itself.

14 Obviously, water is one of our most important
15 resources, we can't live without it, ecosystems can't
16 live without it, and our economy is very tied to our
17 water resources here. Your presence is very, very
18 important to us, and I'm so pleased to see so many
19 people here tonight, and it will be important to you
20 as we move forward with this process and in future
21 discussions on Louisiana's water resources. I think,
22 based on attendance tonight, we'll likely receive
23 quite a bit of information, and we're grateful for
24 that, so I'll keep my comments very brief by
25 recognizing some important partners in our efforts to
26 manage our water resources.

27 The legislation that creates the commission also
28 creates an advisory task force of 49 members, and
29 those members represent many interests across the
30 state including agriculture, business and industry,

1 environmental conservation community, local, federal
2 government, and universities, to name a few. And the
3 task force helps us develop overall policy as well as
4 helping us address specific issues. I'd like to ask
5 the members that are here tonight to please stand up.
6 Thank you. These people work very hard on a regular
7 basis, they are very helpful.

8 A number of our state legislators have been
9 active in developing our state water policy and in
10 supporting it, so I'd like to recognize a few of the
11 people that I've seen, and I hope I haven't missed
12 anyone. Representative Daniel, who is one of the
13 authors of our water policy or the groundwater
14 management act is here, Representative Daniel, there
15 you are, thank you. Representative Jean Doerge is
16 also here. Representative Doerge has been very
17 active. Representative Mike Walsworth, thank you, and
18 Representative Jay McCallum who's been very active,
19 but is leaving us to be a judge now from the
20 Legislature, he's been very helpful as well. Senator
21 Bill Jones I know is here, and I think Senator Jones
22 wanted to say a word of welcome. Senator Jones, did
23 you want to? No? Okay. Have I missed any other of
24 our -- oh, good. Thank you very much. Are there any
25 other that I missed? Oh, sorry, Representative
26 Gallot, nice to see you here. We've spoken on the
27 phone, and he's also very interested in water policy,
28 so I'm glad to see you here.

29 And, of course, thanks to our Sparta Conservation
30 District Commissioners, we're looking forward to

1 hearing from you tonight. Are there any other elected
2 officials that would like to be recognized? All
3 right, great, thank you.

4 With that we'll proceed on our agenda, but I will
5 note that Mr. Durrett is one of our Commissioners, a
6 representative of the Sparta Commission on the
7 Louisiana Ground Water Management Commission, and we
8 have advised Mr. Durrett, as he is one of the
9 applicants, or one of the members of the Sparta
10 Commission that he recuse himself from these matters.
11 So Mr. Durrett will be representing the Sparta
12 Commission on deliberation of this application.

13 Next we'll hear an overview of the application
14 process from Anthony Duplechin with the Office of
15 Conservation. And I'd just like to mention that the
16 Act designates the Office of Conservation in the State
17 Department of Natural Resources as the staff for the
18 ground water management commission, which is housed in
19 the governor's office. Tony?

20 MR. DUPLÉCHIN:

21 Thank you, Karen. I'd like to spend a few
22 minutes giving you a little background on the process
23 and how we got to this hearing tonight. The first
24 thing that happens when someone applies or wants to
25 apply to have an area declared critical is that they
26 must file what's called a notice of intent in the
27 official parish journal of all of the parishes that
28 would be affected by the application. This notice of
29 intent must include the applicant's name, address, and
30 phone number; a brief description of the subject; a

1 description of the location and a map clear enough to
2 easily identify the location of the proposed critical
3 area; a statement that if the area is declared a
4 critical groundwater area, then groundwater use might
5 be restricted; and a statement that comments be sent
6 to the Commissioner of the Office of Conservation.
7 The actual application itself must be filed with the
8 Office of Conservation, or with the Commissioner,
9 rather, no sooner than 30 days and no later than 60
10 days after the publication of these notices of intent.

11 The application must include, once again, the
12 applicant's name, address, and phone number; a
13 statement of the applicant's interest which is or may
14 be affected; identification of the aquifer in
15 question; identification of the proposed critical
16 area; facts and evidence supporting application; a
17 statement of how no action would impact groundwater
18 resources; and proof that the notice of intent was
19 published. In addition, the applicant must also
20 submit recommended management controls.

21 Within 30 days of receipt of the application, the
22 Commission will notify the applicant whether or not
23 the application is complete. The Commission will then
24 review and analyze information in the application, and
25 a record of all public documents will be kept at the
26 Office of Conservation in Baton Rouge. The Commission
27 shall then schedule one initial public hearing in the
28 affected area -- in the area affected by the
29 application. Notice of this hearing is to be
30 published in the official state journal and in the

1 official journal of each parish affected by the
2 application at least 30 days prior to the hearing,
3 which brings us to tonight.

4 This initial public hearing is fact-finding in
5 nature. There will no cross-examination, and the
6 applicant will be given an opportunity to present all
7 relative information. There's also an opportunity for
8 presentations by local, state, and federal agencies,
9 as well as anyone else who wishes to get up and make a
10 statement. All parties shall be permitted to speak
11 and an official record will be kept.

12 Following tonight's hearing, the Commission will
13 issue an order in a timely manner based on scientific
14 data and any other relevant information. The order
15 will contain a statement of findings, which will
16 include a designation of the critical area,
17 recommended management controls, and a response to
18 comments.

19 Recommended management controls may include
20 restrictions on withdrawals and a requirement for
21 permits for new wells. If permits for new wells are
22 required, there may be restrictions on well spacing
23 and on well depth. If restrictions on withdrawals are
24 required, the highest priority for withdrawals will be
25 given to groundwater use for human consumption, public
26 health, and safety. Other uses of groundwater shall
27 be of equal priority and limitations will be
28 determined on a proportional basis. The proposed
29 order and management controls will be made available
30 to the applicant, hearing participants, and anyone

1 requesting a copy. That's why it's important that
2 people fill out those little blue cards even if they
3 do not intend to make a statement tonight. Following
4 this, the Commission will hold a hearing on the
5 proposed order in each parish affected by that order.
6 Notice of this hearing will be provided at least 15
7 days prior to the hearing, and the Commission will
8 adopt final orders and management controls after this
9 hearing process has been completed.

10 COMMISSIONER GAUTREAUX:

11 Thank you, Tony. Our next item on the agenda is
12 Rules of Conduct by Stephen Walker. As I mentioned,
13 the Department of Natural Resources, Office of
14 Conservation is the staff and Steven is an attorney on
15 staff, and he's going to serve as our hearing officer
16 tonight.

17 MR. WALKER:

18 Thank you, Commissioner Gautreaux. Welcome to
19 the Louisiana Ground Water Management Commission
20 public hearing under Docket No. GWMC 02-0001 for the
21 Sparta Groundwater Conservation District Commission,
22 also referred to as the Sparta Commission, application
23 to designate a critical groundwater area in north
24 Louisiana. The Louisiana Ground Water Management
25 Commission was created and authorized by Act 446 of
26 2001. Once again, my name is Stephen Walker, and I've
27 been asked to conduct tonight's hearing.

28 In addition to the commissioners here, I would
29 like to introduce some members of the staff. You've
30 already met Mr. Duplechin. We also have Tim Seiler, a

1 geologist with the Office of Ground Water Management,
2 Ms. Charlotte Hardison, she's the nice lady that's
3 been helping everyone in the back, and also here
4 tonight is Dr. M.B. Kumar, a geologist with the
5 Louisiana Office of Conservation.

6 I ask, once again, that each of you wishing to
7 make a comment tonight, to please fill out one of
8 these blue cards that we have at various places around
9 the auditorium. Please indicate whether or not you'd
10 like to make a statement, and I will generally
11 recognize those persons in the order that I receive
12 the cards from the court reporter.

13 On a procedural note, after the close of the
14 public comment period, the Louisiana Ground Water
15 Management Commission will give a thorough review to
16 all information submitted by all parties. When a
17 draft order becomes available, it will be disseminated
18 to the interested parties. Any future hearings
19 regarding this application will be after due public
20 notice in a similar fashion to tonight's hearing.

21 The Sparta Groundwater Conservation District
22 Commission application seeks to designate a certain
23 area to be a critical groundwater area consisting of
24 all of the parishes of Claiborne, Union, Lincoln,
25 Jackson, and Ouachita, and certain portions of the
26 parishes of Webster, Caddo, Bossier, Bienville,
27 Caldwell, Winn and Natchitoches, all as more
28 particularly described in the application. In
29 addition, the application proposes certain management
30 controls for the Sparta aquifer, which are detailed in

1 the application.

2 Copies of the Sparta Commission application were
3 filed with the Caddo Parish commission, the Police
4 Juries, and the public libraries of the parishes
5 affected by the application, and have been available
6 for viewing by the public. Public notices regarding
7 the hearing tonight were published by the Louisiana
8 Ground Water Management Commission in The Advocate as
9 well as the Bienville Democrat Ringgold Record,
10 Bossier Press Tribune, Shreveport Times, Caldwell
11 Watchman Progress, Haynesville News, Jackson
12 Independent, Morning Paper, Natchitoches Times,
13 Ouachita Citizen, The Gazette, Minden Press-Herald,
14 and Winn Parish Enterprise, all on or before October
15 17, 2002.

16 The purpose of tonight's public hearing is for
17 the Commission to receive relevant comments from all
18 interested parties regarding this application. I
19 stress the word "relevant" since such comments will be
20 considered by the Commission in reaching a decision
21 regarding the Sparta Commission application. An
22 example of a relevant comment would be whether or not
23 the application is in full compliance with Act 446 of
24 2001 and all of the applicable rules and regulations.

25 As a matter of information, the Ground Water
26 Management Commission has existing rules and
27 regulations regarding the filing of applications and
28 the hearing process, which can be found at Louisiana
29 Administrative Code, Title 43, Part IX, Subpart 2,
30 Chapters 31 through 35.

1 In addition to tonight's public hearing the
2 public comment period will remain open until 4:30 p.m.
3 on December 19, 2002. Please understand that tonight
4 you may make oral statements or submit written
5 comments. You may also submit written comments
6 through the close of the public comment period. You
7 may make your comments in the form of a statement or
8 you may also make them in the form of a question;
9 however, if you choose to make a comment in the form
10 of a question tonight, please do not wait for an
11 immediate response. All significant and relevant
12 public comments will receive a response in the
13 Response to Comment section of any proposed order of
14 the Commission. All written comments will receive the
15 same level of consideration as any oral comments.

16 If you have a lengthy statement that you intend
17 to read, please summarize the statement and hand the
18 written statement to the court reporter for inclusion
19 in the record. If you plan to enter into the record
20 any oversized document, that's larger than legal size,
21 we ask that you have a copy that is reduced to at
22 least legal size for the record. If you plan to enter
23 into the record any videotape or computer
24 presentation, such as PowerPoint, you must have a copy
25 tonight for the court reporter.

26 Once again, I ask that each of you wishing to
27 make comments tonight to please fill out one of these
28 blue cards. Please do not disrupt the comments, as
29 such only tends to distort or mask the tape recording
30 and makes the job of the court reporter more

1 difficult. Once again, the public comment period will
2 be held open for a period of 30 days to receive any
3 additional comments from the public, that is until
4 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 19, 2002. Written
5 comments must be submitted to the Louisiana Ground
6 Water Management Commission, P.O. Box 94275, Baton
7 Rouge, Louisiana, 70804-9275, Attention: Anthony J.
8 Duplechin, Jr. Please reference Docket No. GWMC 02-
9 0001. If you need that address again, please see one
10 of us after the hearing tonight. And, once again, all
11 written comments will receive the same level of
12 consideration as any oral comments.

13 At this time I will ask Mr. Duplechin to file
14 into the record the appropriate state exhibits and
15 provide a synopsis of the application process.

16 MR. DUPLECHIN:

17 Thank you, Mr. Walker. The first exhibit I would
18 like to file into the record is labeled State Exhibit
19 GWMC-1, it's a copy of Act 446.

20 The second exhibit, labeled State Exhibit GWMC-2,
21 is a copy of the rules for the conduct of hearings.

22 The third exhibit is a copy of a typical notice
23 of intent filed by the Sparta Ground Water
24 Conservation District Commission, and it is labeled
25 State Exhibit GWMC-3. The reason this is a copy is
26 the originals of the notice of intent are part of the
27 application itself, which will also be filed tonight.

28 State Exhibit GWMC-4 is the original application
29 received by the Louisiana Ground Water Management
30 Commission on July 25, 2002.

1 State Exhibit GWMC-5 is a copy of a letter sent
2 from the Ground Water Management Commission staff to
3 the Sparta Groundwater Conservation District
4 Commission identifying additional information that
5 needed to be included in the application in order to
6 consider the application complete.

7 State Exhibit GWMC-6 is the amended application,
8 which was sent in in response to the request by the
9 staff for additional information.

10 State Exhibit GWMC-7 is a copy of a letter,
11 determination of administration completeness on the
12 application, which was sent to the Sparta Groundwater
13 Conservation District on August 23rd by the staff.

14 State Exhibits GWMC-8A through M are proofs of
15 publication for the notice of public hearing that the
16 Ground Water Management Commission filed with the 12
17 parish journals in north Louisiana, as well as the
18 Baton Rouge Advocate, the official state journal in
19 Baton Rouge.

20 And finally, State Exhibit GWMC-9 is a folder
21 containing comments which have been received in
22 response to the application as allowed for in the
23 rules, and this exhibit will be left open for
24 additional comments to be made.

25 MR. WALKER:

26 Thank you, Mr. Duplechin. The Louisiana Ground
27 Water Management Commission has requested that the
28 applicant, the Sparta Commission, make a presentation
29 tonight regarding this application for the benefit of
30 the commissioners and the public. Afterwards, I will

1 take comments from any representatives of any
2 governmental agencies. Finally, I will take comments
3 from the public. Since we have some Commission
4 members here tonight, I will allow them to question
5 any speakers they may wish, however, only Commission
6 members will be allowed to question the speakers.

7 At this time I will call Mr. Richard Durrett to
8 begin this presentation.

9 MR. DURRETT:

10 First of all, while they're moving down here, I'd
11 like to welcome everybody here. We've been working on
12 this Sparta for five and a half years, and we haven't
13 been able to get over 20 people at a time to listen to
14 us, so I'm truly excited about the crowd we have, and
15 I thank you all for coming. We've felt like for five
16 and a half years this is a very important subject,
17 it's a very important natural resource that we have,
18 and we want to try to present to you tonight our
19 information that we have.

20 I'd also like to welcome the state commission to
21 north Louisiana. You're sitting right here in the
22 middle of the Sparta in Lincoln Parish and we'd like
23 to welcome you here. They always want to know why I
24 want to have the meeting in the afternoon down there.
25 Now they've had to drive up here, maybe they know how
26 long it takes to drive back down to Baton Rouge, since
27 I'm the only one from north Louisiana.

28 I'd also like to recognize the Sparta Commission
29 that is here tonight. Can I get y'all to stand? They
30 are all down here on the first two or three rows. I'd

1 like to thank them for the work that they've done,
2 thank you. We have 19 members of the Sparta
3 Commission; ten are appointed by police juries, six
4 appointed by municipalities that use over 500,000
5 gallons of water per day, and three are appointed by
6 industry. As I said, we've been working on this
7 project for five and a half years, and we are finally
8 to the point that we have some information that we
9 would like to present and to be considered tonight.

10 We have a study that has been done by Meyer,
11 Meyer, LaCroix & Hixson of the Sparta aquifer, and,
12 just to give you an idea of the information, this is
13 the size of the study. Now, I'm not going to go
14 through all this tonight, part of this, as Tony said,
15 has been entered in with the application, but I'm
16 going to try to summarize a little bit of the
17 important facts of the study that relate to the
18 application, and that's the part that we're going to
19 go through first.

20 First of all, we have a map of the freshwater
21 extent of the Sparta, and on the left side, the blue
22 part is the recharge area. That's the area where the
23 Sparta aquifer comes to the ground. That's over
24 around Minden, on up into Arkansas and back down in
25 Louisiana. Let me also say that the Sparta goes up
26 into Arkansas. Arkansas is working on their problem,
27 and we have some people here from Arkansas tonight
28 that we've been, over the five and a half years,
29 meeting with the Arkansas people and working back and
30 forth on this problem.

1 The green area is the freshwater extent of the
2 Sparta aquifer, and then the dotted line on the east
3 side is the area where the freshwater ends and the
4 saltwater takes over. Now, that is an approximate
5 line. That line is being better defined by a study
6 that we have joint ventured with with USGS. This is a
7 map showing a number of wells that were used in the
8 study, 283 wells that were used in the study by Meyer,
9 Meyer, LaCroix & Hixson. There were 90-something USGS
10 wells that were utilized to plot the model and the
11 level of the water in the aquifer.

12 In the study, the areas of risk were areas where
13 the drawdown was greater than one foot per year, the
14 areas where the groundwater is below the top of the
15 Sparta formation, and the area is at risk to saltwater
16 encroachment. As I showed you on the previous map,
17 the saltwater is coming from the southeast. This is a
18 map from the study that shows the area where the
19 drawdown is greater than one foot per year, the level
20 of the aquifer is falling more than one foot a year.
21 That area is shaded right here. This is the recharge
22 area, this is the area where it's dropping more than a
23 foot a year. This is the area where the water is
24 below the top of the aquifer, according to the study.
25 This area is shaded here. And this is a map combining
26 the two, showing you the area where you have -- where
27 it's dropping more than a foot a year and the area
28 where it's below the top of the aquifer, and you also
29 still see the saltwater line, approximate saltwater
30 line that's on the east side.

1 This is a map showing the concentration of
2 chlorides or saltwater in the area that was prepared,
3 and as you can see, the 250 milligrams per liter is
4 usually the secondary contamination level, and that
5 area is over around the east side, around Monroe in
6 Ouachita and Morehouse Parish.

7 This is from the study, the usage data out of the
8 Sparta aquifer from 1980 to 2000. Just a few things
9 to point out here, if you'll look at the totals at the
10 bottom, we started in '80 at 64 million gallons per
11 day, our peak was 1994 at 72 million, and in 2000
12 we're still at about 70 million gallons per day.

13 Breaking it down by parishes, you can see the
14 different parishes. The difference in '94 and '99,
15 the drop, a lot of that's attributed to Bienville
16 Parish. Bienville Parish went from 17 million to 11
17 million, and that's attributed to Smurfit-Stone. The
18 Smurfit-Stone wells, most of them are in Bienville
19 Parish, and they are to be commended for what they've
20 done in the last five or six years in reuse and
21 conservation. They have reduced their pumpage. But
22 you can see that went down 6 million, but the total
23 didn't go down but two million, so we're still not
24 gaining much ground on the usage out of the aquifer.

25 As I pointed out, the peak is 72 million gallons
26 a day in '94. The following is a table ranking the
27 parishes by use. As you can see, Ouachita Parish is
28 the largest user with 23.68 million gallons per day.
29 That's almost 34 percent of the usage out of the
30 Sparta. Bienville is 12.34, Lincoln is 9.16, Webster,

1 Union, and Claiborne.

2 An ultimate 18-million-gallon-per-day reduction
3 of pumpage is forecast by the model in the study to
4 effect restoration of the Sparta aquifer by the year
5 2025. What that study really says is we need to
6 reduce 17 million of that by the year 2005, which
7 probably won't be done, but the mathematical model
8 that predicts what's going to happen to the aquifer
9 over the next 25 years says that we need to reduce the
10 pumpage 18 million gallons a day by 2025. This
11 forecast remains valid only if the current consumption
12 of the aquifer does not increase significantly over
13 the next 25 years.

14 It's important to take timely action to begin the
15 process to provide alternate source of water supply at
16 the earliest possible time; to provide a cushion for
17 economic growth, as we all know, we don't want it to
18 stay the same as it is now, as that prediction of 18
19 million gallons was. To provide a cushion for
20 economic growth opportunities it's recommended that
21 the total production capacity of the alternate surface
22 water supply be at 30 million gallons a day. This
23 provides us a \$12 million reserve capacity for
24 increased economic growth and population growth. The
25 reserve capacity will provide for economic growth
26 permitting the recovery of the aquifer.

27 Alternate water sources should provide potable
28 water supply of 30 million gallons per day, a 30-
29 million-gallon-per-day alternative surface supply
30 water would provide a 17 percent increase in available

1 water throughout the aquifer. A prolonged time for
2 initiating reduction of the Sparta pumpage will
3 produce further declines in water levels and would
4 extend the recovery period of the Sparta aquifer.

5 Just to summarize the study, the current pumpage
6 is 70 million gallons a day, if you don't remember
7 anything else, this chart right here, 70 million
8 gallons a day. The reduction of 18 million by 2025
9 equals the sustainable Sparta pumpage of 52 million
10 gallons per day. That's just to stabilize it. We
11 have an alternative source of 30 million gallons a
12 day, that gives us a planned future water supply of 82
13 million, which is about 17 percent more than the 70
14 million that we're using today.

15 And that summarizes a little bit of the study,
16 and I want to go to the application, the application
17 portion of the groundwater aquifer to be declared
18 critical submitted to the Louisiana Ground Water
19 Management Commission. The goals of the Sparta
20 Groundwater Conservation District is to save and
21 restore the Sparta aquifer for long-term future use as
22 a major water supply source for domestic, industrial,
23 and agricultural use. The Sparta Groundwater
24 Commission voted to recommend to the Louisiana Ground
25 Water Commission that the following parishes and noted
26 areas be declared critical area; all of Claiborne, all
27 of Union, Lincoln, Jackson and Ouachita, portions of
28 Webster, Bossier, Bienville, Caldwell, Winn, and
29 Natchitoches. Now, those are the sections, townships,
30 and ranges which we had to submit it by, but this is a

1 map that shows a little bit of the section, townships,
2 and ranges of the area that we are asking to be
3 considered to be declared critical. The area along
4 this, remember the area along the east side is the
5 recharge area.

6 Supporting facts: the Sparta Groundwater
7 Commission project committee made a thorough study of
8 the available information and presented
9 recommendations to the full Sparta Commission for
10 consideration for possible adoption. The project
11 committee reviewed several maps, written documentation
12 received from the engineering firm of Meyer, Meyer,
13 LaCroix & Hixson, which conducted the engineering
14 study for the Sparta aquifer for the Sparta
15 Commission, and URS, which conducted the modeling
16 portion of the study as a subcontractor to Meyer,
17 Meyer, LaCroix & Hixson.

18 The project committee considered three
19 alternatives for designation of a critical groundwater
20 area; the first being the area where the drawdown
21 exceeds one foot per year, in other words, the water
22 level is dropping more than a foot a year. The second
23 is the area where the water surface has dropped below
24 the top of the aquifer, and the third is the area
25 where the saltwater intrusion is becoming a problem.
26 This is the map, again, that's in the application,
27 showing the area, as we pointed out before, this is a
28 combination of where it's dropping more than a foot a
29 year and it's below the top of the aquifer.

30 Saltwater intrusion will used further for

1 expanding the critical groundwater area at such time
2 as the saltwater intrusion is more clearly defined.
3 As I mentioned earlier, an ongoing USGS survey study
4 is underway to more accurately establish the saltwater
5 intrusion boundary. The Sparta Groundwater Commission
6 has joint ventured with the USGS to do this study and
7 better define where the saltwater intrusion line is,
8 and we should have that information shortly.

9 The Meyer, Meyer, LaCroix & Hixson study shows
10 that the water use from the Sparta aquifer, now
11 approximately 70 million gallons a day, must be
12 reduced to 52 million gallons per day, a reduction of
13 18 million gallons a day, to sustain the aquifer for
14 long-term use. Recommended management controls:
15 provide an avenue of cooperation between the Louisiana
16 Ground Water Commission and the Sparta Groundwater
17 Commission and all state and federal agencies to
18 restrict -- No. 1, restrict the construction, where
19 possible, of any facility in the recharge area, that's
20 where the Sparta comes to the ground, in the recharge
21 area, which would be detrimental, allowing only
22 acceptable, clean water to infiltrate through the
23 ground recharge area. In other words, no hazardous
24 waste sites, no landfill sites that would contaminate
25 the aquifer in the recharge area.

26 Second, new water wells should be subject to a
27 permitting process, existing water wells that exceed
28 their well design capacity, that's a pumpage rate
29 that's shown on the DOTD well registration, shall be
30 subject to a permitting process. This assumes that

1 existing wells will continue pumping at their
2 historical rates as reported to DOTD annually
3 established over the past three years and not increase
4 pumpage dramatically. The permit cost, the cost of
5 the permitting would be the amount required to cover
6 the cost of administering the permitting process.
7 Permit cost will be collected by the permitting
8 agency, and we recommend that that be the local
9 agency, the Sparta Groundwater Commission, be the
10 permitting agency.

11 Well type: any well drilled or constructed for
12 the principal purpose of producing groundwater from
13 the Sparta aquifer. Restrictions of water wells:
14 permit will be required for all new water wells
15 producing in excess of 50,000 gallons per day for any
16 day during the calendar year. I want to emphasize the
17 50,000 gallons per day because there's been some
18 discussion about home wells and wells that are not --
19 that don't produce 50,000 gallons a day. This
20 recommendation is for wells 50,000 gallons per day and
21 more.

22 Evaluations of the permit applications: 1,
23 recommend that the Louisiana Legislature grant
24 authority to the Sparta Groundwater Commission to
25 evaluate the well permit application and to issue
26 permits. We feel like that the permit application
27 should be evaluated on the local basis rather than by
28 Baton Rouge. Evaluations shall take into
29 consideration the following: the date of application,
30 the name of the owner, the location of the well, well

1 spacing and depth, design capacity, anticipated usage,
2 anticipated date of initiating well construction or
3 drilling, classify as to whether or not the well is to
4 be used for public, industrial, private or
5 agricultural purposes, demonstrate the effect the new
6 well will have on the water level and the water
7 quality of the Sparta aquifer. This is very
8 important, if you have a large quantity well that's
9 pulling out of the aquifer, what effect will that have
10 on the aquifer over the next 20 years.

11 Conditions of denial: permit will be denied if
12 the application is incomplete or if erroneous
13 information is provided. The permit will be denied if
14 sustainability of the aquifer will not be maintained.
15 And the permit will be denied if there will be a
16 decrease in water quality, that is, saltwater
17 contamination which exceeds 250 milligrams per liter.

18 The Sparta Groundwater Commission and the
19 Louisiana Ground Water Commission, this is
20 recommendation, should recommend that the Louisiana
21 Legislature develop incentives for the major users in
22 the Sparta aquifer to reduce their usage, either by
23 conservation or going to surface water sources.
24 Recommend that the Sparta Groundwater Conservation and
25 Louisiana Ground Water Management Commission work with
26 the Louisiana Legislature to create a funding
27 mechanism for the purpose of public conservation,
28 education program. We feel that to solve the
29 sustainability of the aquifer we need to look at
30 alternative surface water sources and we need to learn

1 to conserve, and that's the reason for these two.

2 This is a map showing the proposed boundaries of
3 the critical area. There's also, I think, a copy of
4 that in the lobby, and, also, there's a copy of this,
5 there's a number of copies of this presentation if you
6 didn't get one coming in, if you want to get one when
7 you leave. And that concludes that part of the
8 presentation.

9 Let me just make one other point here. We have a
10 website, www.spartaaquifer.com. The complete copy of
11 this study that was done is on that website. A copy
12 of application will be on the website along with other
13 interesting information. There's a link on there that
14 I'd like to call your attention to to the USGS wells,
15 where they have monitored, over the last 20 years, the
16 water level in the aquifer in the different parishes
17 and the location. It's a link, it has USGS well link
18 on the left side, and you go to that and you can look
19 at that information.

20 One other point that I'd like to make and then
21 I'll be through. There's an article that appeared in
22 the Baton Rouge Advocate, June the 25th, where a
23 member of Fenstermaker, who's doing the study for the
24 Louisiana Ground Water Commission, June the 27th,
25 remember June the 27th, we didn't submit the
26 applications until July the 25th, where a member of
27 the Fenstermaker, who is the consultant doing the
28 state groundwater commission, made the statement that
29 the Sparta Groundwater Conservation Commission does
30 not have the necessary information for the state

1 commission to take action on the critical designation.
2 And we disagree with that, especially since he has
3 assumed this before the application was even
4 submitted. And we would like for any evaluation that
5 is done of our application by the state ground water
6 commission to exclude Mr. Darling. With that I will
7 conclude.

8 COMMISSIONER GAUTREAUX:

9 All right, we're going to start the public
10 comments in just a second, and I'll turn it back over
11 to Stephen Walker, but I'd like to do two things
12 first. For the record, note that Michael Taylor from
13 the Department of Economic Development is here with
14 us, he's also a Commissioner, and also, once more
15 thank all of you for coming out tonight. You're
16 participating in a historic moment. We thank you for
17 being here, we look forward to hearing your comments,
18 questions for the record tonight. So with that,
19 Stephen, proceed.

20 MR. WALKER:

21 Thank you. Do we have any Commission members
22 that have any questions for Mr. Durrett? All right,
23 seeing none, thank you Mr. Durrett.

24 All right, we're going to try to pull out the
25 local, state, and federal agencies. Is Mr. Ralph Hock
26 in with the Webster Parish Water Advisory board?
27 Would you like to make a statement, sir?

28 MR. HOCK:

29 It's embarrassing that the least shall be first.

30 MR. WALKER:

1 Would you please state your name and who you
2 represent, for the record, please, before you begin.

3 MR. HOCK:

4 My name, sir, is Ralph Hock. I have done work
5 for the Webster Parish Police Jury, for the Dorcheat
6 Soil and Water Conservation. I've done work for the
7 city of Minden, I've done work for the community of
8 Webster and Claiborne and Bienville Parish. This is
9 civic obligation that I have performed this work.
10 I've done it trying to help my neighbors. I have a
11 civic obligation to those people. I am greatly
12 concerned about my water rights, and I see that they
13 are rapidly eroding away in some of the steps being
14 taken.

15 I greatly appreciate all the work that has been
16 done, the five and a half years of work that the
17 Sparta Commission has been working on it. I have only
18 been working on this water problem for 40 or 50 years,
19 and I see that it is very complex.

20 There is something that I would like to bring to
21 your attention and that is the Louisiana Mineral Code,
22 Revised Statute, Title 31, Act 50 of 1974, the
23 Louisiana Mineral Code, and it set forth the ownership
24 of the minerals that I have and you have. In there it
25 provides for oil and gas, it provides for soil,
26 gravel, and water. I'm not sure, I'm not a lawyer,
27 but they wanted to protect my rights, and I greatly
28 appreciate it, it's a wonderful thing they've done.
29 Through the Department of Natural Resources it's been
30 my fortune, good fortune, to work with this

1 Conservation Department, because that's where I've
2 made my bread and butter is in the oil business, but
3 we had to have water, and we studied it. So I
4 respectfully recommend that the thoughts expressed in
5 the Louisiana Mineral Code, please capitalize upon the
6 tremendous amount of information, all the legal
7 problems they've solved in the Department of Natural
8 Resources, those people are marvelous, but I see that
9 it's being bypassed in some of this administrative
10 procedure.

11 I have in my hands an exhibit, Figure 12, Sparta
12 Water Aquifer as prepared by the engineers, in which
13 they show a pipeline system, a procedure to gather
14 water. It's using water they've already got, and I
15 have superimposed upon that the outcrop of the Sparta
16 Sand. It also shows the location of the Dorcheat
17 Bayou and Black Lake Bayou. Somehow or another it was
18 overlooked. It's very, very critical.

19 And I have also looked at another exhibit, and
20 that is an exhibit prepared by the Louisiana
21 Department of Transportation and Development. Those
22 people have done a marvelous job. They've worked with
23 the U.S. Geological survey, and they issued a report
24 in 1991, and this exhibit and report of 90-4183,
25 Sparta Aquifer Water Level Changes. And it shows the
26 water level, this report shows the water level in 1980
27 and then in 1989, a period of nine years in which they
28 diligently studied the water situation.

29 And I was amazed at the scientific information,
30 geological information; the hydrogeology, the flow of

1 water, and where water does not flow. And I very
2 cautiously mentioned to the engineer on your staff
3 that I would like to submit that later. I didn't, I'm
4 embarrassed to take your time now, but this matter,
5 I'm deeply touched, it is very critical, and I would
6 respectfully like to submit it for your consideration
7 later.

8 But may I point out, in this exhibit, Bienville
9 Parish, man, they're going to take a beating. Nobody
10 has come forth with anything to reimburse them for
11 some of the water rights that they are fixing to lose.
12 They don't know it and realize it, but -- I won't
13 burden you, but you have the -- the record will
14 reflect where these exhibits are. And just to give
15 you an example, sir, the Dorcheat Soil and Water
16 Conservation asked me to present, they want to know
17 what's going on, they're interested in water
18 conservation, and they say the Dorcheat Soil and Water
19 Conservation takes its responsibility regarding our
20 natural resources with grave seriousness, and has a
21 lengthy history of working with landowners under our
22 state association, conservation development and self-
23 government.

24 The Dorcheat Soil and Water Conservation, to that
25 end, is hereby unanimously resolved that while it has
26 no objection to Webster Parish being designated a
27 critical area, regarding study of the Sparta aquifer,
28 it requests that any and all legal action be tabled
29 until the district feels that sufficient information
30 and study has been obtained to allow the parish to

1 address its own water-related problems without state
2 intervention. Thank you, sir, you've been very kind,
3 I appreciate it.

4 MR. WALKER:

5 Thank you, Mr. Hock. Due to the large number of
6 commentors, (applause) we've got a very large number
7 of commentors tonight, and so I'm going to ask you to
8 please hold your applause until the very end. Also,
9 I'm going to need to put probably about a ten-minute
10 time limit on the speakers so that we can try to make
11 sure that everybody has an opportunity to be heard
12 tonight who wants to be heard. Now, of course, you
13 can still submit your written comments until the end
14 of the public comment period on December 19th.

15 All right, our next speaker is Mike Walsworth.

16 COMMISSIONER GAUTREUX:

17 Representative Walsworth had to leave for a
18 function in West Monroe, but he was here earlier.

19 MR. WALKER:

20 Tommy Chatham.

21 MR. CHATHAM:

22 My name is Tommy Chatham. I'm with the Jackson
23 Parish Watershed District, I am the President. I'd
24 like to thank you for giving me time to speak to y'all
25 tonight. We'd like to go on record now with the
26 Jackson Parish Watershed District to be opposed to
27 Jackson Parish being included into this program.
28 After careful review into Phase 1 and 2 of Sparta
29 Aquifer Studies, the proposals done by y'all's people,
30 we're opposed to it. The governor -- governing board

1 is opposed to the critical groundwater area
2 designation, and also the proposal to use surface
3 water from Caney Lake.

4 Our opposition to using surface water from Caney
5 Lake is due to the small watershed area, 41.5 square
6 miles. We cannot support the proposed usage that
7 y'all are proposing. The engineering firm doing the
8 study ignored historical data about Caney Lake water
9 levels and did not ask for any data from the watershed
10 district. Caney Lake was built for recreational
11 purposes. Between the cost of the lake construction
12 and the state park, the state has invested \$32
13 million. Drawing water from Caney Lake jeopardizes
14 this investment.

15 Our opposition to the critical groundwater area
16 designation is that other parishes are the true
17 problem areas and those proposed projects should
18 happen first with a new study done once these projects
19 are operative. The Jackson Parish Watershed District
20 has the legal authority that the Sparta Groundwater
21 Commission is seeking. This Commission is willing to
22 work with any and all agencies to solve water usage
23 issues in Jackson Parish. These decisions should be
24 based on correct data and common sense.

25 By y'all's own program here, in Jackson Parish we
26 show a reduction from 5300 to 2331. We are working to
27 control our water usage in Jackson Parish through our
28 own agencies in Jackson Parish. You need to contact
29 your local agencies and get more information before
30 y'all include Jackson Parish. I'd like to thank you

1 for my time.

2 MR. WALKER:

3 Thank you, sir. All right, our next speaker is
4 Mr. Albert Hulett. Mr. Hulett, would you like to make
5 a statement?

6 MR. HULETT:

7 I'll reserve mine for later.

8 MR. WALKER:

9 Mr. Edward Lee.

10 MR. LEE:

11 I will reserve my statement for later.

12 MR. WALKER:

13 Todd Culpepper.

14 MR. CULPEPPER:

15 Thank you, my name is Todd Culpepper. I'm the
16 president of the Jackson Parish Police Jury, and also
17 the Jackson Parish Chamber of Commerce. I would like
18 to thank the Ground Water Commission for being here
19 today to listen, to gather more, additional
20 information before we take any step one way or the
21 other.

22 Jackson Parish, the citizens realize the
23 importance of the Sparta and what we need to do to
24 save it; however, Jackson Parish is going to ask that
25 we not be included, that we be omitted from any
26 critical designation by this body. We believe that
27 the documents and the study will verify that Jackson
28 Parish has done a tremendous amount of work to cut
29 back on Sparta use.

30 The figures that are available in the study shows

1 that we were using 5.9 million gallons per day in
2 1994. Jackson Parish is down to 2.3 million gallons a
3 day from that time, and we believe the figures would
4 even show that they would be lower than that today.
5 We also believe that we need to look at the list of
6 the top 87 percent of consumption on the Sparta. It
7 is not with Jackson Parish, we're not even in the top
8 87 percent. Now, once again, I would like to say
9 that we do realize that we have a obligation and a
10 responsibility to do everything that we can, but what
11 we're saying is that we do not need to be critical to
12 take those steps because we're taking the steps today,
13 yesterday, the day before. And we are asking you to
14 also look at the information in the study that shows
15 the population for Jackson Parish over the next 25
16 years decreasing, seven percent over that time frame.
17 That would lead me to believe that the population is
18 decreasing, the need for water would also decrease.

19 On top of that issue I think that it's important
20 that this body realizes that there's some additional
21 information at this time that is being put in the
22 model that was not put in the model to begin with in
23 reference to Jackson Parish that I think it would make
24 several more issues that we could bring up at a
25 different time when all that information is available.

26 There was a, I don't want to say a
27 misunderstanding, or what, but there was some
28 information that was out there that was not used to
29 begin with. Since then, the committee has agreed for
30 that information to be put in the study and we're

1 waiting to see exactly what that information is going
2 to bring to the table for us to look at. But we think
3 that any action at this time with Jackson Parish would
4 be premature because all the information is not in.

5 And we also believe that when we look at this
6 problem, everybody has an obligation, but I definitely
7 believe that we need to look at the biggest problem
8 areas and try to help them, because it's apparent that
9 the smaller parishes are going to do, or at least, I
10 don't want to speak for anybody, but Jackson Parish,
11 we're going to do what we need to do, and that's what
12 we're doing right now.

13 So I would ask this body not to deem it
14 appropriate to bring Jackson Parish in as critical,
15 and that if it is determined that any area is
16 critical, that the power over the Sparta be left with
17 a local government. If you declare Ouachita critical,
18 I would hope that Ouachita Parish would be the
19 governing body to handle those issues, and that would
20 be the case with anybody.

21 And if that's not available to the people in this
22 Sparta area, I would request that the House of
23 Representatives and the State Senate have the control,
24 because I think that we have a lot of good people, but
25 the accountability is with elected officials, and
26 without accountability being there there could be
27 tremendous problems in the future. Thank you.

28 MR. WALKER:

29 Thank you, Mr. Culpepper. Mr. Gary Carlisle.

30 MR. CARLISLE:

1 I'm here from Bienville Parish. I'm Gary
2 Carlisle. I'm a member of the City Council, the Town
3 of Arcadia, and a member of the Sparta Groundwater
4 Conservation District Commission. I, too, am
5 concerned that the management control should be
6 augmented or that the parish police jury be included
7 in the management control, and that if there is any
8 bonded indebtedness or sales tax elections that those
9 parish police juries be involved in the decision.

10 I'm also proposing that one solution for the
11 whole Sparta is inadequate. There are individual
12 solutions for each parish and each parish should make
13 those decisions. I'll place my stuff in writing and
14 I'll submit it by the time of the deadline. I thank
15 you for your time.

16 MR. WALKER:

17 Thank you, Mr. Carlisle. Our next speaker is Mr.
18 Jack Beard. Mr. Beard.

19 MR. BEARD:

20 I'm Jack Beard, and I'm president of the Lincoln
21 Parish Police Jury, representing about 42,500+ people
22 who are sitting right in the middle of the Sparta
23 Sand, and are very concerned about where we're going.
24 Mr. Hock has been in the business for 50 years, I've
25 only been here five and a half in terms of the water
26 situation. And I compliment him, I think the Lord
27 should have called him as a Baptist preacher, he's
28 great.

29 Getting back to the subject, welcome to Lincoln,
30 we are certainly glad you all are here. Five and a

1 half years to reaching tonight is just overwhelming to
2 me because we started this in, I think in March of
3 1996, on a rainy afternoon with about 30 people. Now
4 as I look out over this crowd, it frightens me almost.
5 I wish we could have had this many at first, five and
6 a half years ago. We've reached a very critical place
7 in our water situation. If the Sparta Sand was a
8 patient, I think the doctors would have him in ICU,
9 trying to stop the hemorrhaging. We're dropping, as
10 you've already seen, at least two feet a year, and
11 where we go from here, who knows? Saltwater's coming
12 in from the southeast and the level of the water is
13 depreciating.

14 People are shouting for economic development to
15 come to this area. I'm not an industrialist, I'm not
16 a great businessman, I'm a retired college professor,
17 but if I were an industrialist and looking for a place
18 to locate my processes, I don't think I'd be too happy
19 about coming to Lincoln Parish in this vicinity with
20 the water situation being what it is.

21 With all due respect to some of the gentlemen who
22 have spoken before me, I'm concerned about our water
23 and the future, not for me personally, we have water
24 to last my lifetime, probably everybody in this room
25 has water to last their lifetime, but I'm concerned
26 about our children and our grandchildren down the
27 road. As I look about and see all the people and
28 friends in the audience, I think we just have to look
29 northward to get an example of what this Commission,
30 we hope you will do. We certainly, I'm speaking on

1 behalf of Lincoln Parish and the other 11 jurors who
2 support me in asking you all to give heavy
3 consideration to our application because we
4 desperately need some type of control on our water
5 situation.

6 Five and a half years ago we went up to Arkansas
7 to study what they were doing. They did a tremendous
8 job, and I see Ken Rudd and some of his entourage is
9 here tonight, and I hope they speak later on, it might
10 give us some idea how successful they've been. They
11 have five counties up there have been designated
12 critical areas, very much like what we're asking here.
13 They have industry on board, they're in business of
14 bringing the water from Ouachita River, they're
15 fortunate, I would assume, in being able to do that, I
16 don't know all the particulars. But if the Sparta
17 Sand were a great soda and we're all sucking out of it
18 with different sizes of straws, it's depreciating
19 rapidly, faster than it can be replenished.

20 Now, if we go about this thing piecemeal, that's
21 not going to solve our problem. We have got to pull
22 together to determine what our problem is and how
23 we're going to study it and fix it. The way I
24 understand it tonight, the purpose of this meeting is
25 not to come up with a solution, but to just get this
26 area designated as a critical area with a request to
27 the Legislature to start a plan to solve our problem,
28 am I correct? I know you don't answer that now but
29 maybe later you will.

30 So let's don't start putting the cart before the

1 horse. I don't think there's a person in this room
2 tonight that will not say -- that will say that we
3 don't have a problem. We do have a problem. How are
4 we going to solve it? We're going to have to do it
5 all together, and we respectfully ask you to give
6 heavy consideration to our application from the Sparta
7 Water Commission. Thank you very much.

8 MR. WALKER:

9 Thank you, sir. Do we have any questions from
10 the Commission? (No response.) All right. Mr.
11 Robert Reynolds, I see you have marked "if asked." Do
12 you wish to make a statement, Mr. Reynolds?

13 MR. REYNOLDS:

14 Yes, sir.

15 MR. WALKER:

16 Well then you need to come forward, sir.

17 MR. REYNOLDS:

18 My name is Robert Reynolds, I'm from El Dorado.
19 I'm a member of the Union County Water Conservation
20 Board. Two of my colleagues are here with me tonight.
21 What I see is tremendous. Y'all are doing what we
22 were doing about three years ago, and this is part of
23 the process. There are different points of view, all
24 of them valid, but they've got to come together
25 because the Sparta is worth saving. It's a tremendous
26 natural resource, tremendously high-quality drinking
27 water, and we in Arkansas have been fortunate to be
28 able to work on this. We don't always agree, but we
29 have come up with a plan and we are implementing it
30 now.

1 We were recommended to make a 70 percent
2 reduction in Sparta pumpage by the U.S. Geological
3 Survey. Yours looks like about a 26 percent
4 reduction. We achieved 10 percent by voluntary
5 citizen efforts; people became aware of the problem,
6 they cut back all across the county ten percent. They
7 took their good habits to work with them, industry
8 joined in and made another 10 percent cut. We were
9 now 20 percent toward the 70, and for the first time
10 in over 50 years, our water table quit declining. It
11 didn't come up, but it quit going down.

12 We now have a program in Union County whereby
13 we're developing the Ouachita River as an alternative
14 source of supply to bring high-quality water to the
15 three largest water users in the county. That will
16 accomplish the 70 percent reduction. Using the USGS
17 data they've projected that we will recover back to a
18 healthy level in our aquifer in a 30-year period. If
19 there's any way that we can help y'all, we want to do
20 it. Any question they y'all have about what we're
21 doing, we'll be happy to answer it.

22 And more power to you. We're in this thing
23 together. I like the soda analogy, we've all got a
24 straw, we're all part of the problem, but we're all
25 part of the solution. It comes in different degrees
26 of problem and different degrees of solution, but
27 we're all in this together, any way that we can help
28 you, we want to do it because anything that y'all do
29 helps us and anything we do helps y'all.

30 MR. WALKER:

1 Any questions from the Commission? (No
2 response.) All right, thank you, Mr. Reynolds.

3 Our next speaker is Senator Bill Jones. Senator
4 Jones? Not at this time? Okay, how about
5 Representative William Daniel. Would Representative
6 Daniel like to make a statement?

7 REPRESENTATIVE DANIEL:

8 I'd like to reserve my statement until the end.

9 MR. WALKER:

10 All right, just going through these cards real
11 quick, I think I've identified all of the local,
12 state, and federal agencies, and I think we're through
13 with those, so we'll be starting on members of the
14 public. Is there any representative of any state,
15 local, or federal agencies that submitted a card that
16 I missed? Anyone? (No response.)

17 Just to let you know, we're going to try to take
18 a little break at about 8 o'clock, which will be in
19 about 35 minutes.

20 All right, our first speaker, once again I'll
21 remind you, please try to stay within the ten-minute
22 time limit, and I thank you for your understanding in
23 this matter. Once again, please state your name and
24 who you represent when you come to the podium. The
25 first speaker is Mr. Jackie Reppond, I hope I
26 pronounced that right. I'm sorry, I apologize.

27 MS. REPPOND:

28 You got part of it right, that's quite all right,
29 I get mail all the time with Mr. Jackie Reppond. I
30 don't really care to be viewed that way, though. My

1 name is Jackie Reppond, and I serve on the Sparta
2 Groundwater Commission representing industry. There
3 are only three of us on this board that represent
4 industry. I represent a large industry in Union
5 Parish and we employ 2,000 people, and we have
6 approximately 175 poultry growers. So we have a large
7 stake here.

8 We're looking to a sustainable development.
9 We're looking to ways to recycle. We're looking right
10 now at a system that could possibly cut our water use
11 in half and hopefully with incentive program from the
12 Legislature we'll be able to do this. Not only do we
13 have a large stake in this matter; personally, I have
14 two daughters and I have six grandchildren all living
15 in Union Parish, so I have a personal reason for being
16 concerned about the Sparta. But also, like some of
17 the other voices that have been said here tonight, I
18 prefer to see local government controlled from our
19 region. I just think I'd feel more comfortable with
20 the situation there, because I believe that with good
21 common sense that we can take care of it. And I just
22 thank you for the opportunity to share with you
23 tonight.

24 MR. WALKER:

25 Do we have any questions from the Commission?
26 (No response.) Thank you, Ms. Reppond.

27 Our next speaker is Jim Fannin. Mr. Fannin?

28 MR. FANNIN:

29 I'm Jim Fannin. I'm representing the Jackson
30 Parish Cattlemen Association, I'm President of that

1 association, and also representing farmers in our
2 area, along with many concerned citizens. Mr. Jack,
3 I'm glad I took a shower before I came, because your
4 comments, I'm not sure that I'd have water when I got
5 home. I'm glad we're not as critical as it seems to
6 be in your opinion.

7 We believe that the Sparta groundwater aquifer
8 should not be declared a critical groundwater area at
9 this time for the following reasons. We believe the
10 Sparta Commission study to be incomplete and at this
11 time not including all the information available, and
12 by not including and involving more government and
13 university personnel. This study gives the perception
14 that those involved in making the report gave the
15 Sparta Commission what they wanted rather than serving
16 the best interest of the general public. The study
17 gives the idea that the Sparta Commission should have
18 control of all water and the authority to tax water
19 even if it has no effect on drawdown or recharge of
20 the Sparta aquifer.

21 We think that farm ponds, or impounded water, as
22 the study would call it, and shallow wells that do not
23 have any bearing on the Sparta aquifer should never
24 have been included in this study. More of these
25 should be encouraged to actually help save the Sparta
26 water aquifer.

27 We think the Sparta study to be ill-advised when
28 asking for taxing authority. This authority should
29 remain with local and state elected -- and I ask
30 elected to be underlined -- governing bodies. We as

1 cattlemen and farmers are very much interested in
2 saving our water supply, and we'll always be willing
3 to do our part, but until all facts are included and
4 these items that create more government bureaucracies
5 are removed, we ask that you deny the request of the
6 Sparta Commission. Thanks for allowing this time to
7 voice our concern.

8 MR. WALKER:

9 Do we have any questions by the Commission
10 members? (No response.) Thank you, Mr. Fannin.

11 Our next speaker is Robert Greer. Mr. Greer?

12 MR. GREER:

13 I'm Robert Greer from Jackson Parish. During the
14 past 40 years anyone who was involved in water
15 resources knew that the Sparta aquifer was falling at
16 the rate of 1-2 feet per year. Now, I'm here to say
17 that I want to help save the Sparta aquifer, I want to
18 do whatever I can as an individual to save the Sparta
19 aquifer. My problem is this, as a landowner I was
20 told by the group who represents these people that I
21 would lose my rights to my property, as far as the
22 water is concerned, on, above, and below the surface;
23 that I would be taxed at the rate of \$1.23 per
24 thousand for any water I withdrew from my water well
25 on my property; that I'd have to pay a 23-cent per
26 thousand for any water that I took from my well; and
27 that I would have a tax of 25 cents, this would be a
28 tax on my spending, 25 tenths of a cent, I guess is
29 what it is.

30 Now, this, to me, as the first gentleman who

1 spoke made reference to, is invading of my rights as a
2 landowner and your rights as landowners. And if this
3 comes to pass, what about our mineral rights? What
4 about our trees? What about our grass? What about
5 everything else we own? These people are trying to
6 take something away from us that they have no right to
7 take away from us. I have a real strong objection to
8 it, and the people I can bring forth can also object
9 to it.

10 My problem is that this is going to cost the
11 average homeowner, if you let this go to pass, a
12 minimum of \$5 per month or \$20 a month, it's according
13 to how much water they use per month. This could cost
14 the average household \$60 to \$240 a year. These
15 people are interested in raising \$198 million over the
16 next 25 years. Now, I have a problem with them using
17 my water to raise \$198 million. I'm sorry.

18 Now, Lincoln Parish has a problem, there's no
19 question about it, but they also have the right to
20 draw water out of Lake D'Arbonne. They have that
21 written into Lake D'Arbonne Commission when they set
22 Lake D'Arbonne up, they have that right. Now, the
23 reason they're not using the water out of Lake
24 D'Arbonne is because they're going to have to pump it
25 to Ruston, and because it's going to cost them
26 additional money to make it potable. That is why
27 they're so interested in taking your rights and my
28 rights away from us. Thank you. I appreciate you.

29 MR. WALKER:

30 Do we have any questions from the Commission?

1 (No response.) All right.

2 Our next speaker is Wade Meade. Just for future
3 reference, please don't pound on the podium because
4 that's going to disrupt the recording, and really
5 irritate our court reporter.

6 MR. MEADE:

7 We don't want to irritate the court reporter.
8 I'm Wade Meade from Louisiana Tech, and while my Ph.D.
9 is in ancient history and archeology, I do have a
10 Bachelor's and a Master's in geology, and my Master's
11 thesis was in Lincoln Parish, geology of Lincoln
12 Parish. We certainly have a problem with groundwater
13 in all the parishes, including Jackson. There has
14 been a tremendous drop in the level of the Sparta for
15 years now. One of the things that the application
16 proposes to do is to develop more surface water.
17 Another is to protect the recharge area. That's very,
18 very important. Like in Austin, Texas, where the
19 Edwards aquifer, they have very serious penalties,
20 they have signs posted all over the area, almost have
21 to have a permit to dig a post hole. So it's very
22 important to protect the recharge area.

23 Now, one thing that we have not talked about, and
24 John Michael might, is in the recharge area we can
25 build ponds to help recharge faster and not depend
26 upon rainwater. Piecemeal is not the way to save the
27 Sparta aquifer. Local governments will not be able to
28 do that. We all have to work together. Groundwater
29 flows, it does not respect parish lines. Here in this
30 area that depth of the Sparta is slightly to the east

1 -- or to the east and slightly to the south. It does
2 not stop at the Ouachita Parish line.

3 I strongly support the application Mr. Durrett,
4 he used to be, I think he was Durrett tonight, I
5 strongly support this. Thank you very much.

6 MR. WALKER:

7 Do we have any questions from the Commission?

8 (No response.) Thank you, Mr. Mead.

9 Our next speaker is Mr. Robert Moore. Mr. Moore?

10 MR. MOORE:

11 I'm Robert Moore. I am parish president of the
12 Jackson Parish Farm Bureau, and I'm a farmer. We, the
13 Jackson Parish Farm Bureau Board of Directors is
14 opposed to this. We do not believe that this is in
15 the best interest of the parish or in the best
16 interest of farmers. This will infringe upon property
17 rights, and we do not believe that these powers should
18 be given to an appointed board. We believe that any
19 time that the authority to tax should be handed down
20 it should be with elected officials that have some
21 accountability to the public.

22 We do not believe that the problem, as previous
23 speakers have stated, is as severe in Jackson Parish
24 as is led to believe. There are Smurfit-Stone wells
25 that have recharged as much as 20 to 30 feet as they
26 have reduced their consumption. We believe that
27 through a -- any time that you have a problem, your
28 first method of addressing a problem should be through
29 education and conservation. This does not appear to
30 have been done through the Sparta plan. That is one

1 of the last areas that they addressed. It shows that
2 Jackson Parish has addressed the use of water and we
3 have dropped our level. If we -- if that was proposed
4 across the board and all individuals would reduce
5 their consumption, this would have a major impact upon
6 the Sparta aquifer. And we believe that that and
7 future studying and seeing how these wells recharge
8 would be the first method that should be addressed
9 before you start infringing on property owners' rights
10 and assessing taxes. Thank you.

11 MR. WALKER:

12 Do we have any questions from the Commission?

13 (No response.) Thank you, Mr. Moore.

14 Our next speaker is Rick Godley.

15 MR. GODLEY:

16 My name is Rick Godley and I'm here representing
17 my family. In the philosophical question, is the
18 glass of water half full or half empty, someone with a
19 positive outlook would say, well, it's half full.
20 Well, someone with a negative outlook would say it's
21 half empty. When it comes to the aquifer if we ask
22 the same question, is the aquifer have full or is it
23 half empty, who is the positive person, the one who
24 says it's half full or the one who says it's half
25 empty?

26 On behalf of myself and my family and the future
27 of both, I respectfully request that you designate the
28 Sparta aquifer as a critical designation so as to
29 preserve the primary source of drinking water for
30 north Louisiana. As we all know the state of

1 Louisiana has been richly blessed with tremendous
2 natural resources, such as oil, natural gas, forest,
3 rich soil and seafood, just to name a few. Likewise,
4 we sit atop a large resource of fresh water that up
5 until now is relatively unregulated. If we do not
6 take the proper action now to have this source of
7 freshwater protected, then we once again will stand in
8 the future reflecting back on our past with regrets
9 because we didn't seize the opportunity of the present
10 to take positive steps.

11 You already know the alarming rate of the
12 drawdown levels, the saltwater intrusion potentials,
13 and the industrial stress. Please have the foresight
14 today to say that there will be fresh water tomorrow.
15 To that extent I recommend that you declare the Sparta
16 aquifer a critical designation status. Sincerely,
17 Rick Godley.

18 MR. WALKER:

19 Do we have any questions from the Commission? (No
20 response.) Thank you, Mr. Godley.

21 Our next speaker will be John Broussard.

22 MR. BROUSSARD:

23 Yes, sir, I'm John David Broussard. I'm an
24 international representative with the Paper, Allied
25 Industrial and Chemical Workers International Union.
26 I appreciate you allowing me to be here this
27 afternoon. I represent about 3,000 families that make
28 the highest pay rates in this part of the world, and
29 we are concerned that what's happening here tonight
30 can have a serious economic impact on their

1 livelihood, and not just theirs, the rest of the world
2 here. We're talking very high-paying jobs, \$20 plus
3 an hour. And you take that out of the stream in this
4 area, and we're already suffering job losses, please
5 consider this when you make your determination. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. WALKER:

8 Do we have any questions? (No response.) All
9 right, thank you, Mr. Broussard.

10 Our next speaker will be Olevia McDonald.

11 MS. MCDONALD:

12 I'm Olevia McDonald. I'm representing Stone
13 Container Corporation in Hodge, Louisiana. The Stone
14 Container Corporation Hodge, Inc. is committed to
15 being responsible corporate citizens. We accept our
16 role of being good stewards of the natural resources,
17 water is no exception. It is a major consideration
18 when projects are undertaken at our facility. The
19 issue at hand is one of great importance to our
20 facility, as our operation is dependent upon a secure
21 water supply to sustain our existence. Without it we
22 put 637 jobs and an economic impact of such at risk.

23 Our commitment to be responsible with our water
24 management has been demonstrated throughout the years.
25 A task force was formed and we began an aggressive
26 program in the mill to reduce water pumpage from the
27 Sparta aquifer in early 1997, without incentives. We
28 have reduced water pumpage significantly over the past
29 five years. Level of pumpage reflects at least an 8
30 million gallons a day reduction. This has been

1 accomplished through numerous mill projects which have
2 required both a commitment of human resources and
3 money.

4 A Stone employee checks 12 water wells used by
5 the facility daily. Well use is rotated with an
6 average of 10 wells running daily. The rate is
7 published daily and discussed in the production
8 meetings held each morning. We are committed to
9 allowing and supporting an employee to participate on
10 the Sparta Commission and the Louisiana State Ground
11 Water Task Force. The mill participates in the
12 Department of Environmental Quality's Groundwater
13 Protection Division, which was implemented in 1999,
14 that studies water quality. We were an integral part
15 of the Bi-State Sparta Coalition formed in 1997
16 between Louisiana and Arkansas. We report our pumpage
17 to USGS on a monthly basis.

18 The Hodge mill recognizes that it must be in a
19 mode of continuous improvement, and pledges to be
20 responsible in the use and conservation of
21 groundwater. Notwithstanding, we want to make certain
22 that our conservation efforts and reduction in usage
23 are recognized by this Commission. These efforts
24 began long before the Sparta study began. The Sparta
25 study does not include all of our available data,
26 specifically, the data pertaining to the wells used by
27 our facility was not included. Subsequent to the
28 initial study and upon our request, the Sparta
29 Commission has taken this information and is currently
30 having it applied to the model to determine impact.

1 But again, this pertinent information is not included
2 in the study.

3 We encourage this Commission to base its decision
4 on facts, a scientific approach should be followed in
5 this process. Clearly, with the successes documented
6 from our conservation efforts, which have already been
7 undertaken and are underway, and the fact that all of
8 the data has not been included in this study, it is
9 inappropriate to declare Jackson and Bienville
10 Parishes as critical at this time. Thank you.

11 MR. WALKER:

12 Do we have any questions from the Commission
13 members? (No response.) Thank you, Ms. McDonald.

14 Our next speaker will be Bridger DeVille.

15 MR. DEVILLE:

16 I'm Bridger DeVille, and I represent myself as a
17 citizen of Ruston and Lincoln Parish. I wasn't going
18 to speak until I realized I'm probably the only
19 representative of my generation here in this room and
20 I would like for our voice to be heard in some sort,
21 even if it's just mine. I lack the education on this
22 topic to give the most qualified opinion as far as
23 most people go in this room, but I would like to voice
24 a strong -- I urge you to declare it -- gees, I'm
25 getting so nervous I already forgot the word -- yes,
26 critical, yes, thank you. This is why I should have
27 waited 20 or 30 years before I got up here and did
28 this. I urge you to declare it critical because in 20
29 or 30 years it is going to be me and my generation in
30 this room, and I hope that we don't have to have the

1 same conversations. And I hope that the situation is
2 better, and I see it as the simplest view as -- you
3 know, I commend everyone that's done all their hard
4 work at Stone Container and everything to make the
5 problems better, and at other plants, but a good
6 student doesn't make the entire class smart.

7 I think if there is regulation, I think those
8 that are already doing well will have no problem
9 meeting the regulations. I think that it should be
10 regulated by elected officials, though, and I think
11 that would be the truly democratic way to do this from
12 a child's perspective, I guess, in the room, and from
13 the snickers I'm sure it's taken lightly, but take it
14 the way you will. Thank you.

15 MR. WALKER:

16 Do we have any questions? (No response.) Thank
17 you, Mr. DeVille.

18 Our next speaker will be Charles Johnston.

19 MR. JOHNSTON:

20 I am Charles Johnston. I don't know whether I
21 should say what parish I'm from or not. I'm going to
22 just say I'm from Cadeville. If anybody don't know
23 where Cadeville is, I'm safe. But if you think I'm
24 from Ouachita, I'm not. Since we are the largest user
25 of water out of the Sparta, and I hope that it is more
26 people from Ouachita, and Mike Wallsworth was here, I
27 don't know what meeting he had to go to that was more
28 important than this, but I will ask him. Unless he
29 had to meet somebody in the hospital, that may be more
30 important. But I also represent the cattlemen because

1 I am the vice president of about five of these
2 parishes in this Sparta.

3 We as cattlemen use overhead water, most of us,
4 like, ponds, creeks, I have three ponds on my place.
5 My cattle drink out of the ponds, overhead water. And
6 I hope the Commission does not take that right away
7 from me. God gives me that water, nobody else, God
8 gives it to me. I don't have to pay for it, Jesus
9 paid for it. I'm not going to preach, but he's the
10 reason we have what we here have today, all the
11 resources. And I hope that you do not take away the
12 conservation rights of the oil, gravel, trees, all the
13 minerals of the landowner, because our ancestors where
14 my wife inherited part of this property that we own,
15 her folks worked for that. But I understand that
16 Ouachita is in problem, has trouble. Riverwood, or
17 Manville now, is one of the largest users of the
18 water.

19 Somebody was talking about what kind of degrees
20 they had awhile ago. I don't have a Ph.D. or anything
21 like that, I have a CHS, that's common horse sense,
22 and I know like the man was saying about the cup with
23 all the straws in it, if you keep sucking out of the
24 straw don't put anything back in it, you gonna empty
25 it. Manville is one of the largest users of water.
26 We are sitting in the middle of Ouachita Parish with
27 the Ouachita River coming through it. We need to use
28 the resources out of Ouachita River. Also, there's
29 been some talk, and I served some two years on the
30 Police Jury, about getting Caney Lake built. The

1 parish owns that. We could have some overhead water
2 there, but it's sort of like the bridge that's going
3 across the Ouachita River, everybody wants it, but
4 nobody wants to step out and say where they want it.
5 But remember this, like the young man was talking
6 about, our future generation depends on the Sparta,
7 not us, not my age. I could live to be 150, still be
8 water there. But remember this, please do not take
9 our resources away from us. Thank you.

10 MR. WALKER:

11 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)
12 Thank you, Mr. Johnston. We're going to take a break,
13 say about 10 minutes now.

14 (BREAK)

15 MR. WALKER:

16 We'll pick back up with Carla Roberts.

17 MS. ROBERTS:

18 Thank you so much, Commission members and members
19 of the public. I'm Carla Roberts, I'm the attorney
20 for Senator James David Cain and the Senate
21 Environmental Quality Committee. Many of you remember
22 when we were here a couple of years ago, and we
23 conducted the first of the Senate Environmental
24 Quality Committee hearings on this very subject, and
25 it's nice to see a lot of friendly faces again.

26 Senator Cain actually intended to be here tonight
27 to speak to you all; however, his wife was in a little
28 accident on their ranch. As many of you know, he's in
29 the business of farming and ranching, and so there's
30 some inherent risk in that business, as many of you

1 know. So nothing serious, but she's going to be
2 bedridden until the end of the week, probably, so
3 unfortunately he wasn't able to make it here tonight.

4 He asked me to thank you all for coming and to
5 let you all know that he's still concerned about the
6 issue and wants to point that out to you, that he's
7 still involved and still monitoring the Commission and
8 everything that's going on. He asked me specifically
9 to point out and to thank all the people who've done
10 so much to conserve water and the water resources
11 which put us in a better place than we were three
12 years ago when we started with the statewide committee
13 hearings on groundwater, particularly Smurfit-Stone.
14 The fact that they voluntarily were able to cut 8
15 million gallons of water per day tells you that some
16 people do have a lot of, I think it was CHS, common
17 horse sense, or something like that, that a lot of
18 people do and are willing to make that effort. Also,
19 Squires Creek Golf Course, which was built by a group
20 of businesspeople from here, including James Davidson,
21 they constructed some reservoir ponds to use waste
22 water to water the golf course, which is wonderful.
23 They're not drawing from the aquifer, they're not
24 taking valuable resources.

25 Duke Energy had decided not to put their plant
26 here in part because they realized the concern that
27 the community had over the lack of groundwater
28 availability in the area. We also saw CLECO in the
29 Eunice area agree to build some retention ponds so
30 that they would cut out water in the Chicot, and

1 certainly the Chicot is not nearly in as great a
2 stress as you all are, but there are groups of people
3 who are coming together who recognize that there are
4 some problems and who are working toward getting
5 valuable solutions.

6 He wanted me to also remind you all that anytime
7 you have a problem like this, there's always going to
8 be differences of opinion, but the fact that everybody
9 gets together in a room like this means there's a
10 possibility to work out those differences together for
11 the good of the state. I want to thank you all for
12 your time and attention, and hopefully the next
13 meeting Senator Cain can be here to do this instead of
14 me.

15 MR. WALKER:

16 Thank you, Ms. Roberts. Our next speaker is
17 going to be Jim Lee. Mr. Lee?

18 MR. LEE:

19 My name is Jim Lee. I retired to Jackson Parish
20 two years ago to live on Caney Lake, and up until
21 about a year ago Sparta was not in my vocabulary. But
22 I'd like to present some facts that may or may not
23 have been presented so far. Fact 1: the engineering
24 firm doing the Sparta study did not use rainfall data
25 in any of their conclusions. Fact 2: the engineering
26 firm drew an imaginary line at the Arkansas-Louisiana
27 border, and assumes that nothing southern Arkansas
28 does or doesn't do affects the Sparta aquifer. Fact
29 3: the firm doing the study did not seek available
30 data from the Jackson Parish Watershed District

1 concerning the viability of using surface water from
2 Caney Lake. Fact 4: the economy of Jackson Parish
3 centers around two things, the Smurfit-Stone paper
4 mill and Caney Lake. Proposals by the Sparta
5 Commission put the continued viability of the paper
6 mill and the Caney Lake State Park at risk. Fact 5:
7 from July 21st of 2002 until November 5th of 2002,
8 Caney Lake was 8 to 15" below pool stage with no water
9 leaving the spillway. Fact No. 6: the Jackson Parish
10 Watershed District, the Jackson Parish Police Jury,
11 and the majority of Jackson Parish citizens are
12 against the critical groundwater designation for
13 Jackson Parish.

14 The Louisiana Ground Water Commission has a grave
15 decision to make. I urge you to respect Jackson
16 Parish residents' wishes and deny the critical
17 groundwater designation for Jackson Parish, and
18 abandon any proposals for Caney Lake. Thank you.

19 MR. WALKER:

20 Do we have any questions for Mr. Lee from the
21 commission? (No response.) All right, thank you, Mr.
22 Lee.

23 Our next speaker is going to be Travis Tinsley.

24 MR. TINSLEY:

25 Commission members, Mr. Walker, and interested
26 public, I'm Travis Tinsley. I represent a committee
27 of water resources concerns in Claiborne and Webster
28 Parish, including the Claiborne Parish Watershed
29 District Commission, Claiborne Parish Police Jury,
30 Claiborne Parish Water Resources Committee, Webster

1 Parish Water Alliance, the Webster Parish Water
2 Management District, and three members of the Sparta
3 Groundwater Conservation District Commission, that
4 have all been involved in intensive discussions about
5 the application under consideration.

6 Claiborne Parish and Webster Parish interests
7 unanimously concur that application under
8 consideration submitted by the Sparta Groundwater
9 Conservation District Commission should be acted upon
10 with the following changes. Relative to boundaries,
11 we believe that whatever criteria are used to
12 designate the critical area should continue to be
13 applied uniformly throughout the area of the state of
14 Louisiana subtended by the aquifer; that whatever we
15 do in the critical area designated parishes is going
16 to affect other portions of the aquifer that are not
17 designated, and that those criteria should be
18 applicable to protect everybody.

19 Relative to management controls, we believe that
20 the aquifer should be managed by a publicly controlled
21 agency with decisions that are subject to the approval
22 of authorities of the parishes affected, just like in
23 the Arkansas examples, in the model that seems to be
24 working well. The counties in Arkansas have a voice
25 in those decisions.

26 All parish proposals for water management should
27 be considered by the managing agency, and should be
28 selected only after objective rating on the technical
29 merits. The agency should be responsible for making
30 the most cost-effective arrangements for surface water

1 supplies necessary to supplement the capacity of the
2 aquifer and to facilitate its recharge.

3 The managing agency should be provided with
4 dependable, continuing revenue to cover the costs that
5 include qualified technical staff to assess
6 engineering options. Management should be structured
7 to recognize that there are distinct areas of concern
8 from parish to parish in the aquifer.

9 And we object to the application in its present
10 form without these changes because we believe that it
11 addresses only the most immediate part of the problem,
12 and we're concerned that this approach would defer, or
13 complicate a more permanent long-range solution that
14 would be in the best interest of the water users in
15 north Louisiana. Thank you very much.

16 MR. WALKER:

17 Do we have any questions from the commission?

18 (No response.)

19 All right, thank you, Mr. Tinsley. Our next
20 speaker is James Michael. Mr. Michael?

21 MR. MICHAEL:

22 My name is James Robert Michael. I'm the retired
23 director of Louisiana Tech's business and economic
24 research division. When I was down there in the early
25 1980s, we made a study of the Sparta aquifer. That
26 study group consisted of a number of professors from
27 the college of engineers, people from life sciences,
28 bacteriology, the chemistry department, and, of
29 course, I represented the economic part of it. We
30 looked at all the options then, and I can truthfully

1 say, the only thing that's changed about the Sparta
2 aquifer is that it's now about 35-40' lower than it
3 was when we made our study in the 1980s. I found out
4 at the time we made the study that our findings were
5 no different from what another Tech group had found
6 out in the 1950s, that the aquifer was going down,
7 that you could not sustain the rate of withdrawals
8 that we had.

9 I wish to goodness that we could have talked some
10 public agency into sponsoring this project then, we
11 were unable to do so and we were unable to get anymore
12 research money. There was a strong indication from
13 the model that was in existence then that the Sparta
14 was in equilibrium. I had reservations. I said we
15 don't have much margin for error. But differences of
16 opinion and we were unable to act. One thing that
17 made me a little bit timid was, if you'll think back,
18 that was when the AIDS scare first came out, and I did
19 not want to inject into the Sparta the possibility of
20 AIDS being there for future generations.

21 I'd like to go over with you right now what we
22 found then, and we've gone back and updated it, and
23 the situation is not changed, the technology has
24 improved greatly. There is a problem with the Sparta.
25 If something isn't done it's going to continue to go
26 down. I am emphatically in favor of action to save
27 the Sparta. Now, I'm going to tell you something
28 that's going to shock everybody in this auditorium.
29 The problem is solvable, the technology is there, the
30 resources are there and the resources are in a place

1 where they can be used to solve the Sparta problem.

2 Let me give you an example. There are two ways,
3 other than piping surface water to the various
4 destinations, that you can help that Sparta aquifer.
5 One is through augmenting the recharge process without
6 crop flooding. The other is by injection wells. Now,
7 I happen to have been working, because I live in
8 Claiborne Parish, with Claiborne Parish and Webster
9 Parish. We have Dorcheat Bayou running by Minden that
10 flows 200 million gallons a day of water that is
11 usable. We have, right next to Dorcheat Bayou, those
12 abandoned gravel pits, which are nothing but outcrops
13 of the Sparta aquifer. Over the years silt has
14 settled in on the top of it and that needs to be
15 cleaned off, but all you'd have to do then is the
16 recharge of the Sparta from that area would be to doze
17 the silt off of the top and divert the water from
18 Dorcheat a few feet. It runs right up next to that.
19 Then there are numerous places up and down Dorcheat
20 Bayou which are also outcrops of the Sparta aquifer.

21 Over in Claiborne Parish we have an area that's
22 called Flat Lick. It's a five-mile diameter circle
23 west of the Homer oilfield, it is an outcrop of the
24 Sparta aquifer. Flat Lick Creek running through that
25 aquifer, runs about 8 and a half billion gallons of
26 water a year. Right now, because that land is silted
27 over, after 80 years of drainage from the oilfield,
28 oil, salt, everything else you can imagine, it only, I
29 think Ben Magee told me, about one to three inches per
30 year get into the aquifer from there. That needs to

1 be cleaned out.

2 Then in addition to that, there is a creek called
3 Buck Creek which runs within a quarter of a mile of
4 the basin that we're talking about, and Buck Creek
5 lies at a higher elevation than Flat Lick Creek does.
6 It wouldn't take a genius to figure out how to divert
7 the water from Buck Creek into Flat Lick Lake, then
8 we'd have about 14.5 billion gallons a year to work on
9 getting into the Sparta aquifer. We can't get it all,
10 but we could do it.

11 The other thing is that Lake Claiborne, the jewel
12 of all lakes in Louisiana, and I'll fight anybody who
13 argues with me on that, Lake Claiborne flows on a 365-
14 day basis an average of 62 million gallons of water a
15 day. That water is almost drinkable as it is. Now,
16 it can be filtered, and we have a scheme for filtering
17 it after it goes over the dam, we don't want to
18 interfere with the landowners' rights around the dam.
19 But we could go four miles down Darbonne Creek, where
20 they originally planned on having -- where they were
21 going to have an alternative dam site for Lake
22 Claiborne, and line that creek bed with rocks, big
23 rocks, small rocks, gravel, and maybe even some
24 vegetation and further surface filter that. It's
25 almost certain that it would be drinkable at that
26 point. If it's not and if it's injected into the
27 Sparta, the upper few feet of the Sparta are going to
28 take care of the germs that are in it. And then I've
29 been told that the bacteria will not live without
30 oxygen down in the Sparta aquifer, and if it gets by

1 that stumbling block they won't survive in the human
2 stomach. But, we're not going to consider putting
3 anything in the Sparta that is not safe when we put it
4 in there.

5 But we have 62 million gallons a day of water to
6 play with from Lake Claiborne, and D'Arbonne Creek,
7 that clean water from Claiborne goes into Lake
8 D'Arbonne, and we can do some of this downstream
9 there. We could make a number of injection wells,
10 which are very, very inexpensive, and we would not
11 pump water into the ground, we would let gravity, the
12 weight of a 100-200' column of water, spread it as it
13 gets into the aquifer. But we could put any number of
14 million gallons of water into the Sparta through
15 injection wells, and that would be one-third of the
16 way between the present outcrop over in Bossier,
17 Bienville, Webster parishes and Monroe. It won't take
18 then 100 years to get from the outcrop to Monroe, it
19 will be one-third of the way there. We could go
20 further downstream on D'Arbonne and do the same thing
21 and it will be nearly two-thirds of the way. So we
22 have the capability of putting water into the Sparta
23 in the outcrop area and throughout the length and
24 breadth of the aquifer.

25 I am particularly concerned about jumping on this
26 thing immediately because two of the problems we're
27 facing is as that water level in the aquifer has sunk,
28 some of the clay and rock -- clay and sand formations
29 in there have dewatered. I'm told by the geologist
30 that if they completely de-water it would take 1,000

1 years, if ever, we could re-water those clays. We
2 don't want to run that risk any longer than we have
3 to. In addition to that, the weight of about probably
4 an average of 200' of ground on top of the top of the
5 aquifer is tending to compress that aquifer. As the
6 top of the aquifer falls you will never get to raise
7 it back up to its present capacity. To me it's
8 imperative that we get at it as soon as possible, and
9 that we keep those clays from further dewatering and
10 we maintain the capacity of the aquifer as it is.

11 How expensive is it. We've made some rough
12 calculations, less than 10 cents per thousand gallons,
13 if everybody in the aquifer were to pay for that. Is
14 it something that we have to do all or nothing, no, we
15 don't have to do it all. Suppose the people in
16 Webster Parish were to decide, we want to do a small
17 pilot project here. Let's flood 40 acres or 160
18 acres, clean it off, put the water on there and just
19 see if it goes into the aquifer. We know it will.
20 Then have some measuring devices downdip from that to
21 see exactly how fast they flow. Thank you.

22 MR. WALKER:

23 Do we have any questions for Mr. Michael? (No
24 response.) Our next speaker is T.E. Gene Coleman.
25 Mr. Coleman?

26 MR. COLEMAN:

27 My name is T.E. Gene Coleman, and I represent the
28 Claiborne Parish Police Jury on the Sparta Commission
29 that I serve as vice president of. One of the things
30 that I would like to clarify, and I think I have

1 clarified this with our secretary on the Sparta
2 Commission, is that the Meyer, Meyer, LaCroix and
3 Hixson report that defined the Sparta aquifer as
4 critical area was approved by the Sparta aquifer
5 commission, but other sections of that report that
6 have to do with management control and solutions have
7 not been accepted by the Sparta Commission and have
8 not been acted on by the Sparta Commission, and
9 therefore I would appreciate it if you would ignore
10 those recommendations until the review by the Sparta
11 Commission has been completed and there acted upon.

12 The other thing that I would like to say is that
13 one of the things that I've heard here in a good 'ole
14 southern tradition is that people respect property
15 rights, rights of any kind. And I am strongly in
16 favor of doing some things like Arkansas did where
17 they have counties that have a great deal to say about
18 what is done with the water in their area, and I
19 strongly believe that parishes, the parish police
20 juries, should be authorized to also have parish-wide
21 water districts, and those parish-wide water districts
22 should be allowed to enter into cooperative endeavor
23 agreements with adjoining parishes to come up with
24 agreeable solutions for the whole areas that are
25 involved.

26 One of the things that I think is that when
27 things are done voluntarily they are much better
28 accepted than they are if we have this top-down where
29 somebody from way away is trying to tell us how to
30 handle local problems that we may feel like that we're

1 more close to and that one shoe does not fit all
2 situations. And so I would appreciate it very much if
3 y'all in your deliberations and recommendations could
4 come to workable solutions that would involve the
5 parishes themselves having some authority, having
6 authority to create water management districts within
7 their boundaries, and allow those parishes to enter
8 into agreements with other parishes to implement
9 whatever programs that would be satisfactory. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. WALKER:

12 Do we have any questions from the Commission?
13 (No response.) Thank you, Mr. Coleman. Our next
14 speaker is Robin Bridges.

15 MR. BRIDGES:

16 Thank you, Commission. My name is Robin Bridges
17 and I've been asked to speak as part of the Webster
18 Claiborne contingent here tonight. I am a county
19 agent, a parish agent with the LSU Ag center, and my
20 goal tonight is to encourage the Commission no matter
21 what process is developed to include in that process
22 increased funding or funding available to continue and
23 expand the public education and awareness process.

24 In my capacity as a county agent and as a member
25 of the LSU Ag center water resources education team
26 over the last three years I have spoken to literally
27 thousands of people in five of the ten Sparta aquifer
28 parishes; whether it be a garden club, a day lily
29 society, a civic group, like Lions, Kiwanis or
30 Civitan, a youth group, like a 4-H group or school

1 classroom groups, every one of the people that I have
2 spoken to without fail have understood and agreed
3 based on the scientific data that's been presented by
4 USGS and by Meyer, Meyer, Hixson and LaCroix, that we
5 do have a problem, the Sparta aquifer is declining,
6 and they each one pledge to do their best to reduce
7 their use, their individual use of water. So water
8 conservation is key. But I'm very sorry to say that,
9 obviously, the word has not gotten out to everyone and
10 we still need to develop and expand an education
11 program if no matter what process is chosen it's going
12 to be successful. Thank you for your time.

13 MR. WALKER:

14 Do we have any questions from the Commission?
15 (No response.) Thank you, sir. Representative
16 Daniel, I know that you passed earlier. Would you
17 like to have an opportunity, because I know you have a
18 long way to drive tonight. Representative William
19 Daniel.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DANIEL:

21 Thank you. I asked to get back up here because I
22 have to get my kids up at 6:30 in the morning tomorrow
23 to go to school, and I thought if I left right after I
24 gave this speech I might get there just in time. It's
25 a long way to Baton Rouge. Senator Jones, I have a
26 lot of respect for the way you drive back and forth.

27 Commissioner Gautreaux said that this was a first
28 in Louisiana for the meeting of the Ground Water
29 Commission to consider a critical area. It's a first
30 in more than one way because it's the first time I

1 think that Louisiana has been proactive in addressing
2 a situation, and I mean by that that most of the time
3 when we're in the Legislature looking at something
4 we're in crisis mode rather than addressing a
5 situation before there's actually a serious problem.
6 So I think it's a very good discussion we're having
7 here tonight.

8 I was the author of this bill, and that doesn't
9 mean that I sat down and wrote it, because I'm
10 certainly not competent enough to do that, but that I
11 had some really good people helping me here in the
12 audience tonight write this, and I had a lot of input
13 from people around the state. And as the author I
14 guess sort of the buck stops with me, so when we're
15 considering this I would like to tell you at least
16 what I thought the legislative intent was when I
17 drafted this piece of legislation.

18 As Karen mentioned, the bill was really set up to
19 solve two distinct problems. First of all, we wanted
20 to craft a long-term policy for the state of
21 Louisiana, and I think that's being done; and the
22 second was to address any kind of critical problem
23 that we thought was occurring that might pose a safety
24 issue or a health issue to the people of Louisiana.
25 Now, when we talked about critical areas I can
26 guarantee you that the legislative intent was not to
27 address large areas. We thought that would be part of
28 the long-term solution. When I explained this bill in
29 committee and when I explained it on the House floor I
30 explained it as wells that were in jeopardy.

1 When we talk about the Sparta aquifer no one can
2 deny that it's a serious issue and it's certainly
3 something that we need to address, and I looked at the
4 plan presented by the Sparta Commission and I noticed
5 the first thing on there is regulation; they called it
6 management, I call it regulation. I think my idea and
7 the idea of the Legislature when we looked at this,
8 and if you'll look in the bill we discussed it,
9 conservation first, incentive second, regulation
10 distant third. In fact, we put this in the Office of
11 Conservation to use their technical staff for
12 precisely that reason because they were experts in
13 conserving the natural resources of the state;
14 conservation again. Regulation should be the final
15 act, and I think the Legislature is to be commended
16 for not rushing out and setting up an Office of Water
17 Conservation and empowering it to do a bunch of
18 things.

19 Finally, I would like to say that the Legislature
20 did not grant the Sparta Commission or any other
21 agency to regulate, tax, or otherwise manage water in
22 this aquifer. The Ground Water Management Commission
23 was given limited authority to do some of these things
24 only to address a critical need. And I believe that
25 Louisiana was blessed with abundant supplies of water,
26 and I think our water is going to play a major role in
27 the future economic health of the state. One thing
28 I've learned in this, and I'm an engineer, is that
29 it's certainly easier to bring people to water than it
30 is to bring water to people, and a state blessed with

1 as much water as we have is going to attract a lot of
2 people, and when you attract a lot of people that
3 means a lot of jobs and a lot of economic prosperity
4 for our state. But I think we need to address the
5 Sparta in the context of conservation, initiatives,
6 and if we have to very far down the line regulation in
7 such a way as we balance the use of water for future
8 generations and economic prosperity for our state, and
9 that's the jobs of the existing industries that are
10 here.

11 So as the author of the bill I wanted to tell you
12 what I thought about when I was writing it and
13 drafting it so that you'll know that what we were
14 thinking in the Louisiana Legislature. And I thank
15 you for your time.

16 MR. WALKER:

17 Thank you, Representative Daniel. The next
18 speaker will be Reggie G. Skains. Mr. Skains? Not
19 seeing him we'll move on. George Jacob?

20 MR. JACOB:

21 My name is George Jacob. I'm here representing
22 Bienville Parish Police Jury. But who I'd like to
23 really speak to you in behalf of are the several water
24 systems that I've worked for for 17 years in Bienville
25 and Natchitoches parishes. I have in that time seen
26 water quality and quantity go down in every system, in
27 every groundwater system, be it Sparta or Wilcox or
28 what other aquifer, but especially in the Sparta.
29 Right now I have one well that the water levels are
30 below the pumps in water systems at Caster, Louisiana.

1 I have another well that I've lost at the village of
2 Saline, and in the last two years I've lost two wells
3 in the Sparta in the northern edge of Natchitoches
4 parish due to water levels dropping below the pumps.
5 At this point my remaining only well at this system
6 the water level was at the top of the pumps in August
7 last year. So these people think this is pretty
8 critical right now I imagine. I know I do.

9 There's been a lot of talk tonight about Jackson
10 Parish wanting out of this deal. Well, I don't think
11 that you can cut any part out of this body and it
12 still live. There's a lot of Jackson Parish, Smurfit-
13 Stone has done a very good job dropping its water
14 consumption, but I don't see how we can cut Jackson
15 Parish loose without cutting the consumption that they
16 pull from Bienville Parish that would drop our
17 numbers, because a large portion of Jackson Parish
18 water comes from Bienville Parish. And I would like
19 to see some police jury control over the water
20 districts, if it's possible, and I would like to see
21 the Sparta declared critical. Thank you.

22 MR. WALKER:

23 Does the Commission have any questions? (No
24 response.) Thank you, sir. Our next speaker is Jane
25 Stephenson.

26 MS. STEPHENSON:

27 Hi. I'm Jane Stephenson, and I'm a Lincoln
28 Parish resident. And I'm also -- I've been a member
29 of the League of Women Voters since 1972, and I think
30 every ten years we would have a meeting which would

1 concern the Sparta sands, and I think I saw that
2 article you were talking about from the '50s, and each
3 one of our meetings we would have people from Tech and
4 engineers and people from the state who gave really
5 good lessons, and they all concluded that we were in a
6 critical period right then. And I have -- I'm a
7 saver, and this is a newspaper from 1977. You can see
8 it's very old and it's yellow, but it has a discussion
9 by a very young Nancy Bergeron, and we're talking
10 about all of the things that we're talking about
11 today, we talked about then. And I was very
12 frustrated when we first started with this Sparta
13 Commission because we were going to have to study it
14 again, and I would like to speak -- I speak for the
15 league a little bit, we didn't really actually meet
16 and vote on this, but we have reached a consensus many
17 times that we are in a problem, and Lincoln Parish is
18 probably in the biggest problem because we have no
19 river.

20 So I would hope that you would declare it
21 critical. We think it's critical, and I speak for the
22 future generations. Bridger DeVille spoke for
23 himself, but I'm speaking for my grandchildren, and
24 all of your grandchildren need water, and we all need
25 water. And so please, I think we can all work
26 together if we have a better -- the biggest resource
27 we have are our people, and I know, I know we can work
28 together. I hope and I pray we can work together.

29 Thank you.

30 MR. WALKER:

1 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)

2 Thank you, Ms. Stephenson.

3 Our next speaker will be Bobby Price.

4 MR. PRICE:

5 Thank you. My name is Bobby Earl Price. I'm a
6 member of the Sparta Groundwater Commission. I'm also
7 a retired professor from Louisiana Tech, Department of
8 Civil Engineering. My background is water resources.
9 I taught water resources over there for several years,
10 for 32 years. Also was director of the Water
11 Resources Center at Louisiana Tech.

12 I've had the opportunity to work with some of
13 these studies that have been going on at Louisiana
14 Tech over the years; in fact, the ones that were
15 mentioned this evening. I do know that every year
16 that we have looked at it the Sparta has been a major
17 concern. It still is. We're looking at an
18 opportunity right now of trying to do something to
19 save the Sparta. We may not have this opportunity
20 again. We've looked at it every 10 or 15 years and
21 somebody says, well, let's do something about it, and
22 then somebody says, no, let's just hold off, we got
23 plenty of water.

24 As has already been mentioned the declines in the
25 Sparta has been pretty well consistent over the years,
26 but it is going down. A lot of people have indicated
27 that we have a thickness of the Sparta and we have
28 plenty of water in it. I would remind you that the
29 water level in the Sparta is already below the top of
30 the Sparta aquifer itself. As long as that water

1 continues to decrease in level, then the compaction of
2 the sands in the Sparta makes it even harder to get
3 other water out of it.

4 So we're looking at a critical situation right
5 now. It may not be that it will be running dry the
6 next year or two or three or four or five, but we've
7 got to do something in the future. Even if we started
8 at the present time trying to do something, it would
9 probably be something like eight to nine to ten years
10 down the road before something can be done. We need
11 to get the Sparta back to an equilibrium where it can
12 supply the economic benefits that we need for this
13 area. A combination of whatever, of surface water,
14 groundwater, whatever it may be, is needed to do it.
15 This is a time to start. It's not a time to haggle
16 over different things. It's time to come to some kind
17 of conclusion that we can do something with the
18 Sparta.

19 I've heard a lot of maybe concerns, complaints,
20 everything else this evening, and I'm sure that
21 they're all well grounded by the people who are making
22 their comments, but it is time for us to look at the
23 concept of a critical groundwater area, and also the
24 public education, as was mentioned, in order for us to
25 do something with the Sparta. I think the critical
26 groundwater area designation is a good, strong
27 beginning point. It encompasses the entire Sparta.
28 When I say that I'm talking about the effects on the
29 entire Sparta. The critical area that was put into
30 the study and to the request to the state groundwater

1 commission may not include all ground area of the
2 Sparta but it does affect all of the Sparta, and I can
3 assure you. I also happen to serve as chairman of
4 the project committee for the Sparta Groundwater
5 Commission, and I know that that Sparta project
6 committee really did a very thorough job of trying to
7 look at this and be consistent about what would be
8 beneficial for the entire area. I hope that we will
9 get on with the job. It's time to move and I think
10 the starting of the critical groundwater area
11 designation is the proper procedure. Thank you.

12 MR. WALKER:

13 Do we have any questions from the Commission?

14 (No response.) All right, thank you, Mr. Price.

15 Our next speaker is Sarah Lindblad.

16 MS. LINDBLAD:

17 Thank you. My name is Sarah Lindblad and I'm a
18 resident of Ruston and Lincoln Parish. And I would
19 like to thank the Commission, and I'd like to thank
20 the Sparta Groundwater for all their hard work, I know
21 it hasn't been easy.

22 Recently I've had the honor of working with a
23 small group of dedicated citizens to stop the building
24 of a merchant power plant that would use millions of
25 gallons from our struggling aquifer. Although the
26 plant has withdrawn its permit from Lincoln Parish,
27 I'm not naive enough to believe that our efforts were
28 100 percent the reason why. At best, we were able to
29 postpone their decision long enough for them to hang
30 themselves with their own rope.

1 I've learned a lot through this process. The
2 most important was that of being powerless.
3 Everywhere we turned there was no one to help, there
4 was no law, legislation or designation to stop this
5 giant from invading our community and using our
6 valuable natural resources for little to no return.
7 Progress and growth is very important to the area.
8 With the endangered designation we can be picky and
9 powerful and chose those industries and businesses
10 that want to bring value to the community, not
11 deplete. We can send a message to the prospective
12 businesses that we value our community and we welcome
13 you to become a part of it if you bring good things to
14 the area.

15 Businesses that are progressive and smart, that
16 can work to find alternatives to heavy water use will
17 want to be part of an aggressive, smart community.
18 What business would want to locate here when they feel
19 that the citizens are not concerned about limited
20 natural resources? Not one who is looking toward
21 growth in the future. With the endangered designation
22 we will have more choice, not less; more power, not
23 less; and the knowledge that we have done the right
24 thing for all in our community. We can be a shining
25 example of citizens working together to find
26 alternatives, not a tarnished one who lives in the
27 past and does not plan for the future. Thank you.

28 MR. WALKER:

29 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)
30 Thank you.

1 Our next speaker is Patricia Jones. I don't see
2 Ms. Jones coming forward, so we'll move on to John Van
3 Bennett. I'm sorry, my apologies. Ms. Jones is on
4 her way.

5 MS. JONES:

6 My name is Patricia Jones. I'm a resident of
7 Lincoln Parish. I want to thank the Commission for
8 coming to Ruston tonight. We appreciate the attention
9 to our problem.

10 Everyone who lives, works or attends school in
11 north Louisiana is dependent on the Sparta aquifer
12 water to live. Our drinking water comes from the
13 underground Sparta, and our aquifer has been reported
14 to be losing capacity at an alarming rate. This is
15 the reason that we're here tonight.

16 In 1984 the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that
17 our state Constitution contains a mandate for all
18 agencies and officials in the state to ensure that
19 their actions protect the important natural resources
20 of the state, including all water. Article 9, Section
21 1 of the Constitution states, the important natural
22 resources of the state, including the air, water, and
23 the helpful scenic, historic, and aesthetic qualities
24 of the environment shall be protected, replenished,
25 and restored as much as possible, consistent with the
26 health, safety and welfare of the people.

27 Today there's some people in Louisiana who think
28 that they can use as much water as they want, dump
29 their waste into the water and no one can tell them
30 what to do. With this attitude our important rivers,

1 streams, lakes, underground springs and aquifers are
2 not protected for present and future generations. I
3 believe that some of our officials here tonight may be
4 asking the wrong questions. They want to know
5 whether or not our aquifers are in danger, and if so
6 what should be done. I believe that the more legally
7 correct questions are: one, are we following the
8 mandates of the Louisiana Constitution; two, are we
9 making sure our resources will be available in both
10 quality and quantity for present and future
11 generations; three, are we letting a few individuals
12 or corporations squander our important and valuable
13 natural resources for their short-term economic gain.

14 Let's look at our state's protection for the
15 environment that is already in place. Every major
16 activity which results in the pollution of air and
17 water in our state must get a permit from one or more
18 state agency, like the Department of Environmental
19 Quality, the Department of Natural Resources or the
20 Public Service Commission. Some activities may also
21 require permits from the Department of Wildlife and
22 Fisheries, the Department of Transportation and
23 Development, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

24 Any applicants for these permits and the state
25 agencies involved are required to identify potential
26 and real adverse impacts to human health and the
27 environment from the proposed activity, and to ensure
28 that every effort has been made to eliminate, reduce,
29 and mitigate these adverse impacts. This includes
30 showing that alternatives sites and alternative

1 projects have been considered, and that the most
2 environmentally protective project and site have been
3 selected. Every five years or so these facilities or
4 activities must renew their permits, and the
5 applicants and agencies must have an obligation to
6 again look at the permit and ensure that everything is
7 being done to protect human health and the
8 environment.

9 Are these major water users being asked by our
10 state agencies and officials to conserve or to justify
11 their use of our groundwater? I don't think so. I
12 believe that their permit applications and permit
13 renewals are being rubber-stamped by these agencies
14 with little attempt to protect our resources. Most of
15 the big water users in our area can be found operating
16 in other states. In almost every case they are
17 operating with more stringent regulations of water
18 than they are held to in Louisiana. Let me assure you
19 that these industries I'm referring to make a profit
20 in these other locations. Profit is just easier in
21 Louisiana because industry can get cheaper natural
22 resources.

23 Businesses in Louisiana can make a profit plus
24 conserve and protect our most precious resource,
25 water, if our state will ask them to do so. Large
26 municipal water users need to conserve also and be
27 aided in this by funding from the state. I believe
28 that if applicants for projects which will adversely
29 impact our important water resources were really
30 following the Louisiana Natural Resources Protection

1 mandate we would not need to worry about our
2 groundwater and surface water in north Louisiana.
3 Because our agencies and officials have not followed
4 the mandates to protect human health and the
5 environment as identified by Louisiana Supreme Court,
6 we are worried about the future of our important and
7 threatened water resources.

8 I close by asking our state agencies and
9 officials to do the job we've entrusted them to do and
10 protect our water.

11 MR. WALKER:

12 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)
13 Thank you, Ms. Jones.

14 Our next speaker will be John Van Bennett. And
15 incidentally, I had had a previous request for us to
16 take a break about 9:00, so after Mr. Van Bennett,
17 we're going to take about a five-minute break. Okay?

18 MR. VAN BENNETT:

19 Thank you. I'm from Union Parish. My name is
20 Van Bennett. I'm president of the Union Parish
21 Cattlemen's Association, vice president of the Union
22 Parish Farm Bureau. I also serve as president of the
23 Poultry Advisory Board with Con-Ag over there in
24 Farmersville, and I work for Louisiana Ag Credit out
25 of Arcadia. I operate the Farmersville office, and we
26 have about 30 to 40 million in poultry loans in this
27 area.

28 I didn't come here with a prepared speech
29 tonight. I came here to listen, to try to find out
30 the facts. It seems to me that that's something

1 that's lacking is the facts. A lot of the things that
2 have been presented tonight may be facts. These are
3 things that many of us haven't heard. Many of us were
4 not aware of what was going on. You hear bits and
5 pieces. They said they been working on this for five
6 and a half years, they couldn't get more than 20
7 people to the meeting. Has there been proper
8 notification? Has there been -- did you want more
9 than 20 people at the meeting? I represent
10 agriculture, and agriculture in this part of the world
11 is vital to our economy.

12 I respect all the people from Louisiana Tech who
13 have gotten up here, very intelligent, eloquent
14 speakers, but we've got some lay men, we've got some
15 people in agriculture, poultry growers, cattlemen,
16 they need to be heard. I question the representation
17 of the board. I question that it hasn't had enough of
18 our people, agricultural people that make their
19 livelihoods from use of that water. They are good
20 stewards of the land, they're environmental stewards,
21 I'd say 95 percent of them are good stewards of the
22 land. In anything you're going to find anybody that
23 abuses the system, but the majority of the people in
24 agriculture in our part of the world are good stewards
25 of the land, good stewards of the natural resources.
26 I think they need more representation on this board.
27 Their voices need to be heard.

28 Also, the permitting process, I don't think this
29 board should be allowed to handle the permitting
30 process. No costs have been told to us, what it's

1 going to cost the landowner or the people in
2 agriculture. Those facts need to be put out on the
3 table. They don't need to be allowed to have a
4 permitting process, and they say recommendation of
5 50,000 gallons of water from the well per day, that's
6 a recommendation; that's not a fact, that's a
7 recommendation. That recommendation could change. It
8 could change after the permitting process is approved.
9 All the facts need to be laid out on the table prior
10 to any approval process to allow this board to enact
11 laws or taxes on the agricultural community.

12 We in agriculture take a back seat too often in
13 this world today. We produce the food and fiber in
14 this nation, and without us producing the food and
15 fiber of this nation we wouldn't be as strong as we
16 are today. We could be vulnerable just like we are in
17 oil and gas. Everybody realizes we import 60 percent
18 of our oil and gas from the Middle East. We can
19 become vulnerable in agriculture just like we have in
20 oil and gas.

21 What I'm saying is that we need more facts, we
22 need proper representation by all, not just Lincoln
23 Parish, not just Louisiana Tech, not just one parish,
24 but proper representation from all parishes, from all
25 segments, and I feel that we haven't got that. I'm
26 asking that you decline declaring this a critical --
27 the Sparta aquifer critical until we can get proper
28 representation and get all the facts presented to all
29 the people in our area. Thank you.

30 MR. WALKER:

1 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)

2 All right, we're going to take a five-minute break.

3 (BREAK)

4 MR. WALKER:

5 If everybody will take a seat, our next speaker
6 will be John Hays.

7 MR. HAYS:

8 I'm John Hays and I'm representing myself. I'm
9 sure you all have heard that we all have our different
10 economic interest, whether it's raising cattle,
11 chickens, making paper bags, producing college
12 students or whatever, but in this area we only have a
13 single source of potable water, and that's the Sparta.
14 We're using it for industrial purposes, that quality
15 of water is not used anywhere else in the country.

16 Our representative that just left made a point of
17 saying that it's easier to bring people to water than
18 water to people. If you were to put it in a context
19 that all of us see around here, if you were to take
20 water to the paper mill and trucked it down there, Mr.
21 Davis and his tank trucks would have to unload
22 something between two and three a minute. The only
23 alternative for those industrial processes, and
24 surface water can be used for an industrial process,
25 is in the limited surface water impoundments we have
26 available.

27 I'm not an engineer. I was raised by a bunch of
28 them. I contracted and am familiar with water
29 treatment. We don't have a whole lot of surface water
30 around here that's suitable to be treated to potable

1 standards. Now, Dr. Michaels and others alluded to
2 studies back in the '50s, there's some other records
3 of you might say studies that go back to the '20s when
4 the city of Ruston or town of Ruston maybe then
5 started using the Sparta water as its primary drinking
6 water supply. Even back around 1920 it was a big
7 expenditure to deepen some of those wells and lower
8 some of those pumps.

9 I would encourage y'all to designate the critical
10 status of the Sparta. Nothing in that report that was
11 introduced to the deal is a mandated item that will
12 occur. There's plenty of room for more discussion,
13 but something needs to start. Thank you.

14 MR. WALKER:

15 Any questions from the Commission? (No
16 response.) Thank you, Mr. Hays.

17 Our next speaker will be J.E. Mitcham.

18 MR. MITCHAM:

19 I'm J.E. Mitcham. I'm not an engineer, I'm not
20 anything. I'm a musician by profession. I have a
21 Master's degree in music, been raising peaches for 73
22 years. I have an orchard up there for 60 years of
23 several thousand trees, and still have about several
24 thousand trees, about 100 acres and so forth. But I'm
25 going to get mine over with real quick so that
26 somebody else can have some time to talk.

27 All right, number one, there's a well right there
28 within 100 yards of my peach orchard, and it was
29 drilled in 1989, and 2001, January of 2001 it was 36'
30 for -- the water level had gone down 36' in 12 years.

1 That's three feet a year. Well, you can say whatever
2 you want to, but back yonder when I was in -- in 1931
3 when I was in the eighth grade in school, teacher
4 says, we have a new law we want you to learn about
5 this weekend. When you come back Monday morning now I
6 want you to know it. We came back Monday morning, we
7 usually did what we did, we hunted with our slingshots
8 and our air rifles and so forth. She says, what's the
9 new law you learned this morning? She went around all
10 over the room, about 35 of us, and nobody knew. She
11 said, we'll stay in at recess and we'll learn it.
12 Well, that new law, that new law is the thing that's
13 giving us problems right today, water seeks its own
14 level. Yeah.

15 Well, anyway, 12 years that my neighbor's has
16 fallen 36'. Wells that were drilled on our place
17 there, we have about 100 acres of peaches at one
18 place, and we're putting in another 100 there on the
19 other place there now, they were in '76 and '77 they
20 were 6" wells. The quality of water was excellent.
21 How many years is that? About 25, isn't it, about 25
22 years. The quality of water was excellent. We had
23 another well and so forth, we discarded it, we used it
24 for domestic purposes. But anyway, we have only the
25 two left now. The quality of these two wells we have
26 now is awful. You can't even grow blueberries with
27 the water that you have coming out of the water now.
28 The quality of water is awful. All you have to do is
29 just turn -- go out there to my place right now and
30 mash this button and it will come out of there, but

1 it's just muddy and as muddy as it can be. It's
2 fallen, it's gotten way down.

3 What have we done? Well, we have just put in a
4 new irrigation system. We've put in a half a mile of
5 4" line so we could get some city water because we
6 can't drink the water that's coming out of the ground.
7 The new irrigation system is going to be all electric,
8 it has three big electric pumps getting the surface
9 water. We've spent thousands and thousands of dollars
10 trying to get it going. Folks, it's like this, you
11 hear people say things, the people who know something
12 who have told you something, there's two people who
13 made a report tonight that you better listen to.
14 That's one of them right over there, that's Bobby
15 Price; and that other one just went to Haynesville, or
16 Homer, one, because he comes by and gets peaches all
17 the time from us, and the another one is that young
18 man. They know a little bit about what's going on.

19 I want to tell you one other thing real quick.
20 1924, '25, '20s and '30s, back there you could sit on
21 my front porch out there from Summerfield and read the
22 newspaper from the flares from the El Dorado oil
23 field. We're right there with the water right now.
24 Wake up. Pay now or really pay later. Wake up.
25 Thank you.

26 MR. WALKER:

27 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)
28 All right, thank you, Mr. Mitcham.

29 Our next speaker is Cliff Arrington.

30 MR. MITCHAM:

1 I gave Cliff's report when I gave that well that
2 was on my place -- that was within 100 yards from my
3 peach orchard.

4 MR. WALKER:

5 Thank you very much. Our next speaker then will
6 be Paul Washington.

7 MR. WASHINGTON:

8 I'm Paul Washington. I live here in Ruston and I
9 teach geology, including groundwater hydrogeology at
10 the undergraduate and graduate level over at ULM.
11 It's nice to hear my colleagues at Tech are in favor
12 of conserving groundwater.

13 I came to north Louisiana about eight years ago,
14 and part of the reason was to teach groundwater at
15 ULM, actually Northeast at that time, and very quickly
16 I found that I was sitting right on top of a water
17 problem, a groundwater problem. I have had students
18 studying this problem, and yes, the Sparta is a
19 problem. The Sparta is stressed, very stressed. Does
20 that make it critical? What constitutes critical?
21 Ultimately if nothing is done the Sparta will run out
22 of usable water. It's just a matter of time. So the
23 criticality is a question of when do you draw the line
24 in time. It's not a question of whether we have a
25 problem, it's just how serious at this moment do you
26 consider it. As far as I'm concerned it's critical.
27 It needs to be taken care of now because if we don't
28 take care of it now we're going to have to take care
29 of it later, and when we take care of it later it will
30 cost more and it will be tougher to take care of.

1 Arguments that I've heard tonight are somewhat
2 spurious, or actually fallacious in many cases.
3 Property rights, where should we draw the boundaries
4 for the critical designation. Should we exclude
5 Jackson Parish which sits right in the middle of the
6 aquifer. You can't exclude one part of an aquifer
7 from the treatment that the whole aquifer is getting.
8 As long as you are within the stressed part of the
9 aquifer you've got to deal with the whole thing.
10 Water doesn't respect property lines. Water doesn't
11 respect boundary lines. It will flow across.
12 Basically you are dealing with the issue that water
13 will go to where it's been pumped out. If you allow
14 Jackson Parish to pump without any control on it, they
15 will pull water from what is now in Lincoln Parish,
16 from what is in Bienville Parish, potentially even
17 from what's in Ouachita Parish, though the gradient is
18 pretty steep across that boundary towards Ouachita
19 Parish, so it's unlikely that it will reverse that too
20 badly unless something goes in there.

21 So basically it's time to take care of this
22 problem. It's time to look at it as a scientific
23 issue: it is stressed, it needs to be dealt with, it
24 needs to be dealt with sooner rather than later, and
25 you cannot draw a boundary that artificially breaks
26 the stressed area in the middle. Thank you.

27 MR. WALKER:

28 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)
29 Thank you, Mr. Washington.

30 Our next speaker will be Ed L. Ashton or Aston.

1 All right, I don't see Mr. Aston. Our next speaker,
2 I'm not sure I'm able to read this properly, John
3 Lemay perhaps, lives on Georgia Avenue. Okay, Dennis
4 Woodward?

5 MR. WOODWARD:

6 First of all I want to thank y'all for being
7 here. I know y'all have a long drive, some of you,
8 back to Baton Rouge or wherever you're from, and we do
9 appreciate y'all being here, this is an important
10 issue.

11 I am a civil engineer and I do have a Master's in
12 Business Administration, but you have heard from
13 professors from Louisiana Tech that are experts in
14 groundwater and they know far more than I do about
15 groundwater, and I've not heard one of them say that
16 this is not a critical area, the Sparta. Every one of
17 them has emphasized how critical it is. I am new to
18 this area, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to
19 figure out we have a barrel of water here and we're
20 taking water out faster than we're putting water in,
21 and the water at the bottom of the barrel is not as
22 good as the water at the top of the barrel. And
23 eventually you've got to do something, I mean, the
24 water is going to run out, there's no question about
25 that. And so we need to do something. And like I
26 say, the barrel, everybody's drawing out of the same
27 barrel. So you've heard that more eloquently from
28 others, but simplistically it's easy to understand.

29 It seems like a lot of the opposition here
30 tonight is based on misinformation, or a part of it is

1 based on the study that was done by Meyer, Meyer,
2 LaCroix and Hixson, which is not a part of this
3 application. The application is not asking to do some
4 of the things that were listed as alternatives in that
5 study. There is -- it's not asking for taxing
6 authority, there wouldn't be a permitting fee to cover
7 the cost of permitting; it's not asking to regulate
8 any surface water, I think some people have objections
9 on that basis, it's not asking for that; and it's not
10 asking to regulate existing wells unless they're going
11 to dramatically increase their outflow. So I mean, a
12 lot of the concerns that I've heard tonight are not
13 really what this application is about.

14 What the application does ask for is for
15 incentives for businesses and for money to provide
16 conservation education. Those are good things. I've
17 worked with Trailblazers, we've been promoting that
18 for a long time, it's a resource conservation and
19 development organization. We've been promoting
20 conservation. They have kits they give out and
21 things. But I think incentives would be good for
22 existing businesses, like your Stone Containers, I
23 mean, they've voluntarily made reductions, but if you
24 could provide incentives for them to increase that
25 level of reduction, then I think that would be
26 beneficial. And I don't see how anybody, even Stone,
27 could argue with that if we're going to pay them more
28 money to do what they're already doing, or to provide
29 them with incentives to do that kind of thing.

30 What it does do, though, it helps regulate wells,

1 new wells that withdraw in excess of 50,000 gallons
2 per day. I think that's needed. Right now there's
3 nothing to stop a Duke Energy from coming in and
4 drawing out as much water as they want, and that
5 affects all of us. And I think there should be
6 somebody that can say who draws out that kind of water
7 from the Sparta.

8 I do appreciate y'all's time and I thank y'all
9 for being here.

10 MR. WALKER:

11 Any questions by the Commission? (No response.)
12 All right, we'll try once again, Reggie Skains. Mr.
13 Skains? Ed Aston? John -- and once again I apologize
14 for not being able to read your name -- on East
15 Georgia Avenue here in Ruston? Okay. Albert Hulett?
16 Edward Lee? The last card I have is for Bill Jones,
17 Senator Bill Jones?

18 In that case then, before I turn it over to
19 Commissioner Gautreaux for some closing remarks, I
20 would like to remind you that once again the public
21 comment period will be held open for a period of 30
22 days to receive any additional comments from the
23 public, that is until 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, December
24 19, 2002. Written comments must be submitted to the
25 Louisiana Ground Water Management Commission, P.O. Box
26 94275, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70804-9275, and please
27 put attention Anthony J. Duplechin, Jr., and please
28 reference Docket No. GWMC 02-0001.

29 I would like to thank all of the commentators
30 tonight. The comments were clear, straightforward,

1 and very concise, and I appreciate all of your
2 courtesies and cooperation. I turn it back over to
3 Commissioner Gautreaux.

4 COMMISSIONER GAUTREAU:

5 Thank you, Stephen. And I would just like to
6 echo the thanks again, we can't say it enough. You've
7 taken part in history and hope you will continue to do
8 so. We're talking about one of the most vital
9 resources we can talk about, so important on an
10 individual and community, state, global basis. So
11 your patience tonight is much appreciated. Richard,
12 we always appreciate your driving; Olevia, all our
13 northern Louisianians, but I guess tonight we'll
14 appreciate it a little bit more. So again, thanks,
15 and I hope we'll see you in the future on many
16 occasions, and don't forget to hit those web sites,
17 you can also relay comments on the development of the
18 state's water plan as well. So thank you very much.
19 Thank you, Commissioners.

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CERTIFICATE

I, SUZETTE M. MAGEE, Certified Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing hearing was held before the Honorable Stephen Walker, Hearing Officer, on November 19, 2002, in the Ruston High School Auditorium, 900 Bearcat Drive, Ruston, Louisiana; that I did report the proceedings thereof in Docket No. GWMC02-0001; that the foregoing pages, numbered 1 through 96, inclusive, constitute a true and correct transcript of the proceedings thereof.

SUZETTE M. MAGEE, CCR #93079

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