

Water: Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Reports Taskforce Water Meter Installation Goal



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The February 2016 Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (“MDEQ”) publication *Environmental News* (“*Publication*”) reported that the Delta Sustainable Water Resources Taskforce (“Taskforce”) met a February 1, 2016 deadline for reporting of annual metered water use.

The *Publication* states that the goal achieved was the installation of meters on 10% of the Mississippi River Valley Alluvial Aquifer’s (“MRVA”) irrigation wells by December 31, 2015.

Kay Whittington of MDEQ’s Office of Land and Resources is quoted as stating that the acquisition of water usage information by February 1st of each year enables the agency to evaluate water use by crop type, soil type, and precipitation as it is geographically distributed throughout the Delta on a long-term basis. The information is also stated to assist in maintaining awareness of water use at the local level, as well as the regional and farm levels.

The MRVA is utilized to irrigate approximately two million acres in the Delta. The *Publication* states that groundwater levels in MRVA are declining due to increasing irrigation.

The Taskforce was initially organized in 2011 to promote conservation measures, irrigation management practices, and implementation of alternative Delta surface and ground water supplies. It also advises MDEQ on policies related to water resources. Besides MDEQ, the Taskforce includes representatives from:

- Delta Council
- Delta F.A.R.M.
- Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
- Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District

The Taskforce had previously determined that the best way to acquire information on irrigation withdrawals/water use data was through the installation of fixed flow meters on at least 10% of MRVA wells. The MDEQ therefore implemented the Voluntary Metering programs which was supported by Taskforce members with the understanding that mandatory metering would be implemented if the program’s deadlines were not met.

