

Honoré seeks limits on industrial use of groundwater

By AMY WOLD, March 12, 2014

Russel Honoré, the retired Army lieutenant general who has enlisted in several environmental causes, called Tuesday for removing oversight of the state's water resources from the state Department of Natural Resources.

Honoré also told a Baton Rouge area water technical committee his [“Green Army”](#) will be seeking legislation to limit industrial use of groundwater — an attempt to address the long-standing concern about [saltwater intrusion](#) into the Southern Hills Aquifer, which serves as the drinking water source for Baton Rouge and surrounding [areas](#).

Honoré said the Green Army, made up of environmental organizations, nonprofits and residents from across the state, is pushing for several water-related changes in the Legislature this session.

One of those objectives is to move the responsibility for water resources out of the jurisdiction of the state Department of Natural Resources.

He said because DNR's focus is primarily on oil and gas issues, water resources often don't get needed attention.

“We need the jobs; God knows we need them,” he said about DNR's focus on the oil and gas industry, “but at the same time we need strong protections on our water.”

In addition, Honoré said, the group plans to propose legislation to limit the industrial use of groundwater.

That legislation hasn't been introduced yet and he told the Capital Area Ground Water Conservation Commission's technical committee, which includes representatives from Entergy and ExxonMobil, that the Green Army wants industry to help write the legislation.

Urging the need to work together, he said it's important to get industry's input on what it would take either in technology or incentives to make the move from using groundwater in their operations to using water from the Mississippi River.

He noted that under existing law it's perfectly legal for industries to use groundwater, but that doesn't mean that people are powerless to try to force change.

“We can't win in court, but we will put 100 grandmamas in front of your refinery,” Honoré said, adding that it shouldn't come to that since “there's no one better than the folks in this room” to address and solve this issue.