Nearly $13.3 million in sewer fees collected

By GIBBS ADAMS
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Sewer user fees in East Baton Rouge Parish yielded nearly $13.3 million in 1986, and investment of idle funds accumulated another $621,489 in interest.

Robbie Robinson, head of the Sewer Service Office, reported 110,196 customers during the year paid $12,742,215. In addition, the office collected a surcharge, a liquid domestic waste fee, and environmental permit fees to boost the total by $520,866.

The money goes into the comprehensive sewer fund, from which money is being borrowed to pay contractors on the north and south sewer treatment plants until revenue bonds are sold.

The fund also includes $8.3 million from the general fund of the parish and supports the operation and maintenance of the sewer system.

David Medlin, assistant director of finance for the city-parish, said the comprehensive sewer fund had a balance of about $8.5 million this week and predicted the revenues will run out in March or April unless the courts give the go-ahead for sale of the $55 million sewer revenue bond issue authorized last year by the Metro Council.

In April the second quarter allocation of general fund revenue — more than $2 million — will be credited to the comprehensive sewer fund.

Issuance of the revenue bonds has been delayed by a taxpayer suit contesting their validity.

Judge William Brown has ruled the bonds legal, but the ruling is on appeal to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal, which set a deadline of Friday for attorneys to file briefs on a city-parish motion to dismiss the suit.

If the suit is not dismissed by the court, a hearing on the merits of the case will be scheduled in April.

Robinson said the Sewer Service Office has collected a total of $18.675 million in sewer user fees since the Metro Council adopted the fee schedule in June 1985.

Total interest collected from investment of idle funds boosted the total by $703,883, he reported.

The fees each year are based on average amounts of water used in February, March and April of the previous year and October, November and December of the year before last.

The figures are calculated from figures provided by eight water service companies in the parish.