The state agencies remain cautious. They can afford to be. The residents of Cow Island cannot. They need help. Now. They need a new water supply now.

— Juli Metzger, Executive Editor, The Daily Advertiser

Not a drop of time to waste

Juli Metzger
Executive Editor

There are few things that are more basic to our happiness and well-being than water. And few things more fundamental than the freedom to drink water without fear of losing your life to it.

But in the past 10 years, the residents of Cow Island and Forked Island have been forced to begin each day by thinking about their own water supply. The state and federal governments have been working on a solution for decades. But it's not enough. The people of Cow Island and Forked Island no longer take water for granted. They know this because that's what they did in the past and it worked. They know this because they see their neighbors suffering and dying. And they know this because they have a right to expect better from their government.

The residents themselves, in search of answers, have found that only the arsenic readings came back at levels above the state’s safe limit. They suspected something environmental was causing the cancer, but no one would listen. When their parish priest — Father Bill Rogalla — tested in July and showed 50.8 ppb, this summer, Fr. Bill was diagnosed with bladder cancer. The St. Anne’s Rectory was removed from its fountain and the Advertiser tested at 43 ppb. It is ironic that water would be at the heart of a mystery why so many people on Cow Island and Forked Island have cancer.

The EPA recommends:

- Install your own filtering system
- Harvest rain water for your supply
- Expanded regional water system
- Financial help for his community

Solutions

Financial help for his community

Ideally, state agencies remain cautious. They can afford to be. The residents of Cow Island cannot. They need help. Now. They need a new water supply now.

This is going to be expensive and most in Cow Island and Forked Island are one of modest means. That a safe water supply by itself had killed for these families. They’ll figure out how, if the state can meet them halfway. That means putting the infrastructure that would provide public water: water treatment facilities, pipes, are contaminated should be cleaned up.

There isn’t time to go through a lot of finger pointing. We need to agree that something must be done.

There isn’t time to wait on lawyers and lawsuits.

There isn’t time to trust the private wells of all 1,500 residents of this tight-knit community.

It is to be expected that someone would be at the heart of the mystery at the heart of the mystery in south Louisiana.

After all, water is what makes where we live the place it is. A significant portion of our population depends on groundwater from individual wells.

It is the water that we have hatched such industries as corn-growing and stealing oil drilling in the Gulf is a major influence on our economy.

And, of course, there is agriculture that helps sustain us.

But there is more. We must work with those industries come responsibilities for maintaining the land.

It is clear that there has, at the very least, been a breakdown at this level. There is little doubt about the contamination of well water in Cow Island and Forked Island. One result is that the residents of Forked Island have more time to live with than the residents of Cow Island.

The people of Cow Island and Forked Island do not lack water for granted. Neither should we. The state needs to act and show whatever it takes. There is the solution that typically comes to mind first is for the state or parish to run a public water system to serve residents.

For residents who chose not to wait on the state can take matters more into their own hands with at least two other options: buying their own filtration system or harvesting rainwater. There is no overbilling here. We must take from this report: Cherish the land and respect your environment. That can be done starting today.

Executive Editor

Juli Metzger