

Water Planning And The LCRA -SAWS Proposed Water Project

Part One

By Ronald Gertson

With such unfounded cynicism being directed by a few at the LCRA/SAWS Water Project (LSWP) and at various LCRA staff persons, I feel it is my responsibility as a Region K water planner representing this area to set the record straight and to bring some civility and facts to the discussions.

The LSWP is a complex project that cannot be conveyed or comprehended through brief comments or casual conversations.

The project seeks to develop and conserve surface water and groundwater from the three lower counties along the Colorado River.

It entails much that can be misconstrued if not carefully analyzed within its proper scientific and political framework.

Water is an extremely important issue - so important that we are easily tempted to let emotions drive our actions on the subject

rather than relying on reason. It is my hope that readers will set aside that emotionalism long enough to rationally analyze the facts and then judge the project's merits accordingly.

As a regional water planner involved with the water sharing project from its infancy, I hope to be able to offer a factual, historical perspective of the project through a series of five articles.

The following topics will be covered: 1) History and Politics, 2) Key Elements, 3) Surface Water Development, 4) Groundwater Development, and 5) Conservation.

I challenge readers to refuse the easy route of emotional outbursts against the plan and instead to choose to make an informed response. The material I will be providing is just the tip of the iceberg, but it will be considerably more comprehensive than what one will get down at the coffee shop.

History and Politics of the LSWP:

In order to appreciate the stewardship that went into the creation of the LSWP, one must start with the very basic fact that water in the rivers and streams of Texas belongs to the state of Texas not to the individuals temporarily enjoying its use along the way.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is vested with the responsibility of permitting this water for public and private use, but the final say on the use of Texas' water actually lies with the Texas Legislature.

As a result of the increase of the population in urban centers most of Texas' legislators now hail from urban areas with ever-growing water needs. Water issues divide legislators along urban vs. rural lines, the result being that urban legislators will have the final say on water issues

in Texas.

In 1997 the Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1 (SB1), the omnibus water bill that comprehensively changed the way water planning is done in Texas.

This law created a "bottom up" approach to water planning and as a result, the state was divided into 16 planning regions.

Each region is represented by a planning group composed of local individuals chosen to represent each of eleven water interest groups - river authorities, county government, municipalities, agriculture, groundwater conservation districts, industry, small business, environment, electric generating utilities, water utilities and the public.

The initial memberships were established by the Texas Water Development Board with local input, after which time additional and replacement members have been chosen by the regional water planning groups themselves.

Wharton County north of highway 71, Matagorda County and Colorado County as well as eleven other counties along the Colorado River are in Region K, a.k.a. the Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (LCRWPG).

The remaining portion of Wharton County south of Highway 71 is in Region P, a.k.a. the Lavaca Regional Water Planning Group (LRWPG) along with Lavaca and Jackson Counties.

SB1 calls for these regions to assemble a regional water plan once every five years. The first such plans were completed in January, 2001 and the second round of plans was completed in January of this year.

SB1 also calls for the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to assemble the 16 regional water plans into a comprehensive State Water Plan. In so doing the TWDB has the authority to over-ride or alter regional plans that conflict

with one another.

This serves as an incentive for regional planning groups to cooperate with one another in seeing that no such conflicts exist.

During the 1997-2001 regional planning round Region K determined that a large percentage of irrigation needs in the three lower counties would go unmet during droughts if strategies for meeting those needs were not developed and funded.

This irrigation shortage results primarily from the growing upstream demands of the Austin area.

By state law, these upstream municipal needs will take precedent over agriculture's need for water.

Agricultural interests in the lower counties are heavily dependent on "interruptible" stored water from the highland lakes system operated by the LCRA.

It is designated as interruptible because it is not contractually guaranteed to be available during extended periods of drought.

Municipalities and industry purchase "firm" water from LCRA at a cost about twenty times that of interruptible stored water. Firm water is reliable even through a repeat of the drought of record.

Generally, the more firm water LCRA delivers, the more unreliable the interruptible water becomes for irrigators. In fact, if there is not significant inflow to the highland lakes by the end of this year, the LCRA's Water Management Plan may trigger a curtailment of irrigation supplies in 2007.

Early in 2000 while Region K was developing unfunded strategies to meet the irrigation shortages, the neighboring Region L was identifying future shortages of their own in excess of 350,000 ac-ft.

Region L includes the fast-growing city of San Antonio and the L planners were evaluating as many as 14 different combinations of water supply strategies that relied heavily on large quantities of water from Region K (our region) to meet Region L's growing needs.

In order to meet K's own needs and prevent the L plan from conflicting with the K plan, Region K planners proposed to Region L a single water sharing strategy for meeting both the K needs and a portion of the L needs, thereby defusing a volatile situation that could have led to an unjust, unilateral movement of water out of Region K either through TWDB's conflict resolution or through unfavorable legislative action.

The proposed plan was initially known as the Region K/Region L Water Sharing Plan.

The basis for this plan was a resolution adopted by Region K referred to as the Nine-Point Plan, because it identified nine points of concern that had to be satisfied before such a water sharing plan should move forward.

The intent behind the nine points was to see that there would be no losers in such an inter-regional water sharing plan.

The 77th Legislature vali-

dated this wisdom when it passed HB1629 in 2001 as a means of providing for the plan's implementation.

HB 1629 includes much of the language from the nine points as conditions that must be met before the LCRA can transfer water to a neighboring basin.

This legislation made it possible then for the LCRA and the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) to enter into the agreement dated March 1, 2002 now referred to as the LSWP.

The LSWP calls for a seven-year study period followed by a 50-year implementation period and a possible 30 year extension.

Four years of study are completed and some preliminary, albeit incomplete, data is presently available for some of the studies.

None of the studies have uncovered a fatal flaw as of yet.

A fatal flaw would occur if a necessary element of the plan is deemed incapable of meeting either the legal or financial constraints placed upon it. Such a fatal flaw would be reason enough for SAWS to legally pull out of the project at that time.

Next week I will lay out the key elements of the plan and some potential impacts of each, while also highlighting important questions yet to be fully answered.

Detailed plan and study information may be accessed at www.lcra.org.

Additionally, I and other planning group members are available for presentations to civic groups and organizations.

school lunch menu

Breakfast

Mon.-No School
Tue.-Donuts, sausage link, or cereal, juice, milk.
Wed.-Breakfast burrito or cereal, juice, milk.
Thur.-Western scramble or cereal, juice, milk.
Fri.-Cereal, yogurt, juice, milk.

Lunch

Mon.-No School
Tue.-Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, green beans, pears, roll, milk. HS Alt.-Steak Fingers.
Wed.-Hamburger, salad, pickle slices, fries, fruit, milk HS Alt.-Chicken tender on bun.
Thu.-Beef taco salad, salso, pinto beans, pineapple, milk HS Alt.-Chicken quesadilla.
Fri.-Spaghetti, corn, peas, bread, fruit, milk HS-Alt.-Pepperoni hot pocket.

Farm Bureau To Host Field Day Oct. 10

The Colorado County Farm Bureau, with the assistance from Rice, Weimar and Columbus FFA,

will host the 9th annual Ag Field Day, on Oct. 10 at the Colorado County Ag Complex starting at 9 a.m.

The Ag Field Day is designed for the third grade, which allows hands on farm and ranching commodities. Local resource persons will provide their knowledge on their commodities.

Commodities will be rice, soil conservation, mules, poultry, horses, horticultural, ATV safety, dairy, pet care, beef and wildlife.

The public and any third grade home school students are invited to the event to visit the different commodities.

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School Days

- Mon.-** Senior picture make-up day
FFA Meat Fundraiser
4:30 p.m. JH volleyball at Ganado
- Tue.-** 5:00 p.m. Volleyball at Hallettsville, 9th, JV, V
6:30 p.m. Band Pot Luck Supper in Commons
- Thu.-** 5:00 p.m. JH Football at Edna
5:00 p.m. JV Football vs. Edna
- Fri.-** Middle School Picture Day
4:00 p.m. Volleyball at Edna, 9th, JV, V
7:30 p.m. Varsity Football at Edna

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Can You Vote? Puedes Votar?

The system of voting has not changed, the reasons for voting are always in the interest of both the voter and the candidate running.

What needs to change is more people taking a little time from their busy day to day activities to become informed not only with the candidates running for a particular office or position, but also familiarize themselves with the candidate.

The greatest feeling one will get from voting for the candidate of their choice is that he/she will know that their one vote does make a difference. One day in the future, when as a registered voter, one encounters a situation which results in them having to confront an elected official, they can rest assured that their situation will be given the attention deserving of their support no matter who they voted for during the election process.

In order to make your voice heard, you must vote. To vote, you must be a registered voter. You only have to register once, afterwards the renewal is automatic.

I would like to dispel some rumors floating around. I have heard some people, from other countries, say that they don't want to register because then the government will be on their case. Case about what? This is

not true! Another rumor I heard people talking about is that if you were a registered voter you could be called to serve as a juror.

The truth to that is that, not only voters are selected from that list so are licensed drivers. Please get out and get registered, then make your voice heard, vote! I am urging all to take part in the elections and I do mean all of Eagle Lake. Lets show the surrounding counties what a united city can do.

La sistema de votar no eh cambiado, las razones de votar siempre estan en el interes de los candidatos ambos con los que voten. Lo que se necesita cambiar es que la gente tome un pequeno tiempo en sus vidas de dia a dia actividades para no solamente informarse de los participantes corriendo por un dicho position o oficina, pero tambien para familiarizarse con los candidatos.

El sentimiento mas grande que puede recibir uno por ver votado por su candidato de su opinion es que se daran cuenta que su solo voto si hace una diferencia. Algun dia, en el futuro, como votador registrado, si se enuncenran en una situacion que tienen que hacer contacto con el candidato

eligido, se quedaran seguros que se les dara la atencion merecida no importa por quien votaron durante el proseso de elecciones. El mode quo pueden hacer que so oigan sus voces tienen que votar. Para votar tienen que ser registrados para votar.

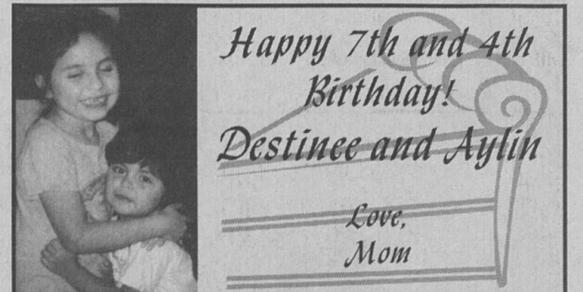
Solamente una vez se tienen que registrar, despues automaticamente se renueva. Hay unos rumores flotando por hay que quiero disipar. A oido decir que si uno se registra para votar, que despues el gobierno anda sobre el caso de uno.

Caso de que? Esto no es verdad! Tambien otra gente dicen que si se registra uno, que despues le hablan para servir como jurado.

La verda de esto es que todos que tienen lisencia de manejo tambien esta disponibles para llamarles igual que los registrados. Por favor, registrense, luego hagan que sus voces se oigan, voten! Les suplico que todos tomen parte en las elecciones, en serio digo todos de Eagle Lake. Vamos a enseniale a los condados cerca que en Eagle Lake "Somos Unidos!"

Felipe Soto, Jr
Eagle Lake.

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BELATED HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!
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 WE LOVE YOU!!!!
 YOUR FAMILY

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Fall Festival
 Sunday, October 8, 2006
 KC Hall I-10 W Exit 693

BBQ Beef and Sausage
 Serving Starts at 11 a.m.
 Meat To-Go at Pit • Drive-Thru Line
Adult-\$7 • Children-\$3 (under 12)
 1st Annual St. Anthony Columbus Day
 Golf Classic-Info call 979-732-2562

Silent Auction 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Big Country Auction 1 p.m.
 Old Tyme Music By Donnie Wavra &
 The Hi-Liters 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Outdoor Entertainment By
 DJ-Darren Kunz

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 Grocery Walk • Plant Walk • Penny Draw
 Fish Pond • Cookie Monster • Ring Toss

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For Further Sale Information Please Contact:
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 Bunge Halla — Sale Advisor
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