

Comments Texas Water Development Board Plan - 2007

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My name is Walter West. I am a retired Professional Engineer. My home is on the shore line of Sam Rayburn reservoir and I believe that I can provide a perspective of the issues inherent in the draft plan that are representative of thousands of property owners, and business enterprises that are dependent upon the recreational values associated with the large surface water reservoirs in East Texas. I appreciate the opportunity to address the board and I want to assure you that my opinions and my input are not influenced in any way by any monetary gain or rewards.

As I studied the proposed Region I plan, I focused on the Angelina County, City of Lufkin regions. Even so, I believe some broad general conclusions can be drawn from the limited review.

An immediate conclusion can be made by examining the TWDB and Pineywoods Ground Conservation District board memberships responsible for the plan preparation. For the most part, the persons acting in an official capacity on the boards are associated with municipal interests, agriculture (meaning poultry interests), timber interests, power generation utility interests, industrial interests, etc. The board members are certainly motivated to protect their turf as should be expected. However, I did not recognize anyone on the boards who would be considered a champion for the interests of the ordinary citizens, or anyone who would be a champion for the recreational opportunities inherent in our large E. Texas reservoirs - even though the recreation, tourism, and retirement community attractions in E. Texas are providing the foundation for the growth of the service / consumer related businesses responsible for ever increasing tax returns in the region. The indisputable growth has taken place without any significant increase in local industry. As a consequence of the board membership many of the numbers presented in the Region I plan that predict future demands may be inflated. Projected population increases are not hard fact and the projected estimates are influenced by wishful thinking in some cases. As a possible example - the projected increase in Lufkin's population from the present to 2050 is 256%. Assuming the figure is accurate, it would behoove future residents to train in Houston traffic before a making a decision to become a future resident in the region.

There is a common misconception that Sam Rayburn reservoir was not created to provide water for recreation. An official USACE report contains the following - with reference to Rayburn. "The project was designed to control flood waters, generate hydro-electric power, provide water for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses, and other purposes." Some may consider the order given as the appropriate order of importance but a court may be required to decide the particular weight of each use - or order of importance. There are 19 parks on Sam, Rayburn that provide boat launching ramps. There are 15 USACE parks, 6 US Forest Service parks, and 3 privately owned parks. Visitors to the USACE parks have been between 1.3 and 1.5 million per year over recent history. Obviously, the government of the Rayburn construction era would not have constructed these facilities if it was not intended for the reservoir to support recreational activities that benefit ordinary citizens.

In 2004 the TWDB announced a loan of \$55,299,706 to the LNVA earmarked for construction of a surface water treatment plant and distribution system to serve a partnership of LNVA, Lufkin, Zavalla, Huntington, and other smaller entities. According to the TWDB press release, the system will be designed to accommodate 25,000,000 million gallons per day drawn from Sam Rayburn Reservoir. Interestingly, a search of local news archives produced no mention of the \$55 million dollar loan. When the TWDB press release author was asked about distribution of the press release she indicated that the press release was transmitted to Lufkin media, but not to media in Jasper or Beaumont. More recently the Lufkin Daily News published a TCEQ announcement in the Classified Section declaring their intention to create a Special Water Utility District that will have very significant powers. The announcement reads exactly as follows. "*The nature of the services to be provided by the Four Way Special Utility District is to purchase, own, hold, lease, and otherwise acquire sources of water supply; to build, operate and maintain facilities for the transportation of water, and to sell water to individuals, towns, cities, private business entities, and other political subdivisions of the State.*" The proposed district will also have the power of eminent domain and be able to issue bonds. Very few citizens are aware of the creation of the proposed special