

April 25, 2003, Friday, BC cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 405 words

HEADLINE: Pickens withdraws request for freshwater district

DATELINE: MIAMI, Texas

BODY:

Oilman T. Boone Pickens and other landowners who make up Mesa Water Inc. have withdrawn the group's petition to the Roberts County Commissioners Court to form a freshwater district.

Mesa spokesman Bobby Stillwell said the group's landowners are assured they can sell their water with or without a freshwater supply district in the county.

Earlier this month, the commission tabled consideration of Mesa's petition for a countywide freshwater supply district, along and another group's competing petition. The competing petition remains before the commission.

Mesa's proposed district contained about 46,507 acres, with contracts or other relationships to about 112,000 acres in water rights.

Stillwell, an attorney, said Mesa's decision to suspend attempts at creating a freshwater supply district were made in response to recent progress in finding a buyer for their water.

"We think (the freshwater supply district) would have been a nice thing to have. But with that in mind and the fact that we've been delayed by a county judge, it would just not be worthwhile to pursue it any more," Stillwell told the Amarillo Globe-News.

"Water buyers all over Texas have told us that they already have the necessary governmental rights, and that they don't need a freshwater supply district in the Panhandle," Stillwell said. "The only difference is that if the Mesa group of landowners had formed their own freshwater supply district, those powers would have remained under the control of people in Roberts County."

Kent Satterwhite, manager for the Canadian River Municipal Water Authority, said he has met with the Pampa City Commission to discuss possible land acquisition and the potential purchase of water rights in Roberts County.

The need for more water rights acreage is long-term, Satterwhite said.

Satterwhite said he has discussed possible land acquisition with officials in Amarillo, Borger, Brownfield, Lamesa, Lubbock and Pampa and plans trips to the other member cities of Levelland, O'Donnell, Plainview, Slaton and Tahoka.

CRMWA has not contacted any potential seller about purchasing water rights, Satterwhite said. He dismissed recent speculation that CRMWA plans to purchase water rights from Pickens.

Mesa owns about 165,000 acres of water rights in Roberts County. In May, Mesa received permits from the PGCD to pump 150,000 acre-feet of water per year for sale to a municipality.

LOAD-DATE: April 26, 2003