

Mt. Pleasant Tribune October 18

## GROUPS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS FACE OFF WITH BACKERS OF MARVIN NICHOLS DAM

By Jamey Giddens  
Tribune City Editor

The Sulphur River Oversight Society will have at least one victory to celebrate in their battle to prevent the construction of the Marvin Nichols Dam.

The National Wildlife Federation listed the proposed project at the top of its recent "Down the Drain" list. The list, released Tuesday, highlights "expensive and inappropriate state water projects," according to NWF Gulf State Director Susan Kaderka.

Mike Huddleston, president of the Sulphur River Basin Authority, which hopes to develop the dam should the project be approved, refuted Kaderka's findings.

"The Marvin Nichols Project would benefit this area economically," said Huddleston. "First of all the lake would be developed by the Sulphur River Basin Authority, and not the Corps. of Engineers. Plus the cost of the land around the lake would go up tremendously because it would be prime land for real estate development."

According to Kaderka, The Marvin Nichols Project would, cost tax payers \$1.7 billion, flood 72,000 acres in Red River, Morris and Titus counties to provide 161 billion gallons of water per year, via 172 miles of pipeline, to the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and ruin the ecology of the Sulphur River area.

"The state's population is expected to double in the next 50 years, which means Texans clearly do face a water challenge," admitted Kaderka. "But we've got to find a way to supply water for human needs without drying up our streams and rivers and without wasting billions of dollars."

According to Kaderka to determine a way to meet water needs in Texas without harming the state's ecology, Texans are going to have to look at ways to use water "more effectively, and not just assume we can pump or divert or capture all the water we might want."

Huddleston said, the Marvin Nichols Project, which is among several proposed projects listed on the State Water Plan, would boost the economy in the area, while more-than-adequately providing for the water needs in

Northeast Texas.

"If Senate Bill 1 [the water plan] passes, the dam would be built, with all of the cost of building it going to the Dallas/Fort Worth area," said Huddleston. "Therefore, they would pay for 80 percent of the water to be sent to them, and 20 percent, which would be about a billion gallons of water a day, would remain in Northeast Texas at no cost to local citizens."

NWF Water Resources Scientist Dr. Norman Johns said, "If the major cities in the Dallas/Fort Worth area would simply bring their water usage down to the level of other major Texas cities, the so-called 'need' for the Marvin Nichols dam would evaporate."

Huddleston contended it would be selfish for the Sulphur River area to have access to such a massive amount of water and not share it.

"We'll never use that much water," said Huddleston. "And for all those people who are saying they are going to lose their land, what do we say to the 8 million or so people in Dallas/Fort Worth who won't have any water in 20 or 30 years? Besides when Interstate 30 came through, people lost land for that. We all have family and friends in Dallas/Fort Worth. What about those of us whose children have to move there because there aren't any opportunities here, do we want them and their families to be without water?"

Max Shumake, SOS President isn't as concerned with the citizens of the Dallas/Fort Worth area as he is how the dam will impact citizens locally.

"Marvin Nichols will destroy the Sulphur River," said Shumake. "It will also destroy productive ranch land by flooding 72,000 acres of a natural wildlife habitat, forests and family farms in Bowie, Franklin, Red River, Morris and Titus counties. This is a huge giveaway, pumping 161 billion gallons of East Texas water a year to Dallas. By all accounts, East Texans are on the short end of the pipe."

Huddleston said he believed local groups like SOS had "jumped the gun," in the efforts to condemn the Marvin Nichols Projects, and were using "scare tactics" by forecasting monetary loss and ecological destruction.

"The State Water Plan hasn't even been approved," stressed Huddleston. "People are acting like we're about to break ground. The Marvin Nichols Project has been a part of the State Water Plan for 40 years and is accepted by the majority of people and the state as a viable and profitable plan for providing water needs both in Northeast Texas and in Dallas. As far as wild life and the environment, environmentalists should see the

benefit of this reservoir. For every one acre that would be flooded, one to five would have to set aside, in the same general area for wildlife mitigation."

Shumake said he hopes the meeting his organization, in conjunction with Friends United for a Safe Environment (FUSE), is holding on Saturday will increase public awareness about the Marvin Nichols Project and serve as a stress reliever for battle-weary opposers of the dam.

"There will be free barbecue, starting at 5 p.m.," said Shumake. "There's a softball field, volleyball nets and dominoes for those that like. Anyone who wants to come earlier and become knowledgeable about the project can come out around noon, because we'll be there setting up from noon on. We've invited all of our area politicians and the Sulphur River Basin Authority to attend."

Huddleston said he received his invitation to the event, but has declined to attend.

"I do not plan to go," said Huddleston. "What could I say? These groups have the line drawn in the sand. They are adamantly opposed to a project that hasn't even been approved yet, so there is nothing to debate. Now if and when we receive a permit to begin the project, I'll be happy to address any and all concerns. This project will positively or negatively affect five or more million people, and the opinions of 50 or 60 people are not a majority."

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