

## **Many turn out to protest proposed reservoir**

By ANTHONY DAVIS of the Texarkana Gazette Staff, 10/24/01

MOUNT PLEASANT, Texas--Opposition Tuesday to the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir was not unanimous, but it was close.

After asking a second time how many in the audience of nearly 100 Northeast Texas residents, cattle ranchers, farmers and land owners supported the 2002, 50-year state water plan, a single arm was eventually raised.

Jane Morris of New Boston, Texas, appeared to have made her point.

Bill Mullican, director of water resources planning for the Texas Water Development Board and meeting coordinator, acknowledged the proposed reservoir along the Sulphur River is the most controversial of the plans being considered by the agency.

In response to droughts in 1995 and 1996, Texas began looking to regional recommendations for the state's water needs for the next 50 years. Under Senate Bill 1, passed by the Legislature in 1997, the state decided it needed a "new approach to water management," Mullican said. He stressed the unique and overwhelming task entailed in enlisting the help of planners from "the bottom-up, instead of from the top-down."

Marvin Nichols Reservoir is one of 16 proposals being presented for public comment before any official board or legislative action. The reservoir is projected to cover 72,000 acres, or almost 100 square miles.

With the population of Texas expected to swell to almost 40 million by 2050, much of it in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, Northeast Texas residents are not eager to surrender their land and livelihoods for their city cousins.

"Conservation in Region C (the D/FW area) is something we still struggle with," Mullican said.

Rita Beving, a Sierra Club member from Addison, Texas, said the water conservation issue is central to the projected needs presented in the state's plans.

Taking her turn to speak, Beving said there is a lack of conservation throughout the state.

"Much of our water use is wasteful. There are dryer regions than Dallas that use less water," Beving said. "No one is dying of thirst and they are all doing fine. There are sections of Dallas where people are using up to 275 gallons a year per person. In Garland (an adjoining city), it's only about 161 gallons per person. The water demands are using outdated information. It doesn't consider that the project cost may exceed its benefits."

Someone closer to home, James Presley of Texarkana, Texas, drew a rousing response

from the group as he detailed his concerns about the plan.

"This is not about water, it's about money. It's about the destruction of precious land and wildlife habitat. Water may be a renewable resource, but land is not." he said. "Mrs. Gloria Taylor, at Hubbard School on July 12, 2001, told the truth in one simple sentence that none of the Marvin Nichols promoters can refute, and it refutes everything they say. "God will send us more rain, but He won't make any more land."

Referring to the approach of the Northeast Texas Water Planning District as "stealth politics," Presley said there were no less than 50 "strong and valid reasons" to take the Marvin Nichols proposal out of the state water plan. He also questioned the state and regional adherence to its own policies, rules and guidelines for conducting its plan.

"Some rules have not been followed and some rules have been violated. The proposal should be invalidated," Presley said. "It casts doubt on its legality and suggests flying below the radar on this issue. For this to be a truly bottoms-up procedure, let's make sure it's legal from the top-down."

The TWDB will continue to hold public meetings and videoconferences throughout the state this month with two more meetings in Austin to be held in November.