

Conservation key in water plans

By Matt Terrell/Times Record News
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Conservation will be a key component in fixing future water shortages in North Texas, according to a newly updated plan for water needs.

However, at least one Wichita Falls woman thought the plan looked a little murky.

The Regional Water Planning Group Area B held a public hearing Wednesday on its updated water plan. Representatives from consulting firm Biggs and Mathews Inc. presented an outline of how water needs will be met until 2060 in the 11 county area surrounding and including Wichita County.

Projections in the plan show that the dwindling water supply in the area can't keep up with a relatively constant demand.

The strategy to combat water shortages includes conservation, increasing Lake Kemp water elevation, expanding groundwater use and purchasing water from local providers.

State legislation in 2001 began requiring planning groups to consider conservation strategies first when updating plans to meet city water needs to 2060.

So now, water conservation will be a large-and mandated- part of North Texas future.

Penny Miller, a Wichita Falls resident, said the Area B plan was vague when it comes to outlining how the conservation process would happen. She said it didn't seem like the plan could realistically increase the water supply as it projects.

Water conservation methods for city areas include education, water audits to find waste, low-flow clothes washers and water pricing to encourage conservation. The plan also proposes reusing wastewater and enclosing irrigation canals in pipes. Conservation efforts could account for about 55 percent of the new water supply, the plan predicts.

"It just seems like they feel it's going to happen naturally with some of suggestions," she said. "Who's responsible for making sure education happens?"

Miller would like to see the planners pay more attention to conserving water in industrial and agriculture settings, as opposed to just city plans.

"There are a lot of ideas there to save water," Miler said. "The board might have talked about them, but they didn't show up in the plan."

Planner Kerry Maroney said he doesn't want to place counties in a position to be dependant on water conservation, so that's why there are other alternative such as developing groundwater and buying from other providers.