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RESERVOIR PLAN DRAWS OPPOSITION AT MEETING

By: SARA FOLEY, Staff Writer

GILMER - Citizens from the North East Texas water region expressed discontent about plans the City of Dallas has to proceed with construction of the Marvin Nichols Reservoir, despite the area water planning board discarding that idea.

About 50 citizens gathered Tuesday night in the Gilmer Civic Center to voice their opinions on the proposed North East Texas Regional Water Plan for Region D. Region D covers 19 counties, including part of Smith, Upshur, Wood, Van Zandt and Gregg.

Ray Flemons, a consultant for the water board, announced that Region D's plans for the next five years did not include any new reservoirs and said reservoirs would only be considered in the future if all other options had been exhausted.

Most of the citizens that spoke supported Region D discontinuing the Marvin Nichols Reservoir as an option, but expressed concern that it could still be an option for Region C, which includes Dallas.

Flemons said population growth within Region D is expected to increase 72 percent, or from roughly 700,000 to 1.2 million, but that any potential water shortages could be covered with existing water sources.

George Frost, a member of the Region D planning board, said that reservoirs should be a last resort and that no region should be able to take another area's land and use it for water.

"If one region can come in and take over our land, then we have no need for water planning boards outside the metropolitan areas," he said.

Clarksville Mayor Ann Richards voiced support for the building of reservoirs.

"With new reservoirs we can create a better tax base, it will be better for our children," she said.

However, it was concerns about taxable lands that Billie Lindsey was concerned about, saying that once land is taken away, schools and other public entities suffer.

John McConnell read aloud figures that indicated that there was enough water in Texas to supply Texan's water needs several times over without any need for new reservoirs.

"It's coming to the point of absurdity for someone to want to take more land to get water when we have so much already," he said.

Longview resident Steven Whitsett said he thought Dallas was wasteful and expected water prices to be unreasonably low.

"They want more cheap water and they don't care who they step on to get it," he said. "The time to stop crushing people is now."

Other counties affected by the Region D proposed plan include Bowie, Camp, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Harrison, Hopkins, Hunt, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Rains, Red River and Titus.

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