

Focus on water conservation likely to grow

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Thanks to a lack of rain, North Texas is now facing thirsty lawns and water restrictions.

But the Dallas-Fort Worth area hasn't seen anything yet, according to Bill Meadows, director of the [Texas Water Development Board](#) and a Fort Worth businessman.

The region currently has 1.5 million acre feet of available water, but by 2060 it will need 3.3 million acre feet, said Meadows, speaking June 22 at the 2006 Environmental Seminar of the Greater Dallas Chamber.

While it grates on some to hear it, the Dallas-Fort Worth area has the highest per capita water use in the state, Meadows said, noting that D-FW uses 280 gallons per capita, per day, while San Antonio uses only 150.

"That's sobering," he said.

While D-FW is making plans to flood agricultural land in other parts of the state to build new reservoirs, Meadows explained that water is not only a difficult commodity to move, but also an expensive one. The cost doubles every 50 miles, he said, and the current water plan for the next few decades has a price tag of nearly \$20 billion. For that reason, Metroplex water in the future is going to cost a lot more than it does now.

One proposed reservoir, Fastrill Lake in southeast Texas, would involve flooding 35,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, a prized habitat that's dwindling statewide. D-FW water planners say the lake is needed to supply future water needs in D-FW, but it recently was taken out of play. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in mid-June approved creation of the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge instead.

"It would take an act of Congress to change that," Meadows said. "If that is not a wake-up call for this region, I don't know what is."

The bottom line, Meadows said, is that conservation is in the region's future in a way not envisioned thus far, particularly for industry and business.

Got an idea?

North Texas entrepreneurs can win \$1,000 to \$5,000 for their business by submitting their business plan to the North Texas Business Plan Competition. The contest is sponsored by the [International Small Business Development Center](#) and the African American Leaders of

Tomorrow. The competition is open to small businesses, startups and entrepreneurs. The entry form is due July 14, with the business plan due Aug. 1. See www.iexportimport.com.

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