

A pipeline from river is possible for future Water management plan geared to area's growth

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A statewide water management plan designed to meet growing water demand includes the option of creating a major reservoir in the Coastal Bend by connecting a pipeline to the Nueces River.

A public hearing Thursday at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi allowed the public to comment on a draft of the 2007 State Water Plan, including numerous options for the Coastal Bend, before a final report by the Texas Water Development Board is presented to the Legislature in January 2007. A water plan is submitted to state lawmakers every five years for consideration.

The plan, designed to accommodate the water needs of the increase in population from 2010 to 2060, recommends the creation of 14 major reservoirs and has an estimated cost of \$31 billion.

In that 50-year period the region's population is expected to increase by 44 percent to 885,665 which will increase the water demand by 36 percent, said Dan Hardin, board spokesman.

Regional planning groups from around the state submitted about 4,500 water management strategies for reuse of water, seawater desalinization, creating both minor and major reservoirs and water conservation.

The 16 groups are made up of farmers, ranchers, and representatives from water districts, river authorities, agriculture, business and the members of the general public.

But some conservation groups in the state are concerned that parts of the plan could damage natural habitats and could be a misuse of funds and supplies. Lacey McCormick with the Texas Wildlife Federation said the plan is not balanced and needs more of a focus on water conservation.

"We need to plan for our future and this plan falls short," McCormick said.

McCormick said creating a major reservoir from the Nueces River could change the flow of water or hurt the local habitat.

Carola Serrato, co-chair of the Coastal Bend Region planning group, said the strategy does not designate a specific location or time frame and that an environmental impact study would ensure there was the least possible effect on the area should it be approved in the future.

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