

Editorial

Water Resource Study Critical To Our Area

WATER IS A finite resource. As citizens, we all have a duty to protect it, preserve it and use it as efficiently as we can.

A lot of people don't like to think of water as a commodity, but water still isn't free. Costs are associated with pumping it, moving it and possibly treating it.

And, like any commodity, it has drawn entrepreneurs who are looking for buyers. Farmers fear these enterprises will siphon more water out of the ground than they can afford to lose.

As the state's population increases and urban areas flourish, the question of priority increasingly will pit rural interests against urban interests.

One of the biggest hurdles is complacency. As long as consumers turn on their faucet and water flows out, they assume everything is all right. It's easy to become complacent.

But an adequate supply of water is absolutely critical for the economic survival of West Texas. It is the lifeblood of this region.

Over the next three years, a small cadre of water experts must balance the needs of the High Plains agriculture and ranching economy and the long-term health of the Ogallala Aquifer, reported The A-J's Elliott Blackburn.

Prevailing research suggests this region drains the aquifer much faster than it can recover. Yet water planning documents over the next 50 years show an increasing dependency on its dwindling reserves.

The Ogallala is vital to agriculture and ranching across the region, and farmers are relying on the water district boards - largely made up of rural land owners - to represent their interests, according to Steve Verett, executive vice president of Plains Cotton Growers.

"All of these water issues are of concern to our producers," Mr. Verett said.

Not only current but also future generations of West Texans stand to benefit immeasurably from conservation efforts allowing growers to produce at least the same or greater crop yield while using less water.

It is difficult to underestimate how important a dependable, long-term water supply is to the future of West Texas in general and Lubbock in particular. It isn't hyperbole to say without water resources, all other considerations for the well-being of the citizenry are moot.