

August 03, 2002



Telford opposes reservoir project

Lawmakers want firm answers before proceeding with Marvin Nichols

By [PRASHANSA SAI](#) Texarkana Gazette

State Rep. Barry Telford, who says he has never taken a firm position on the Marvin Nichols Reservoir before, did so Friday at a press conference at the Bi-State Justice Building in downtown Texarkana.

"I have said from the beginning that I support the State Water Plan and that I had no position on Marvin Nichols but as time has gone by, more things have come to light," he said. "Some 400,000 acres of hardwood timber could be removed from timber production through lake construction and mitigation ... that got my attention."

Though Telford, D-DeKalb, stated he has never publicly supported the Marvin Nichols Reservoir, he has made several comments to the press in favor of the State Water Plan, which includes the proposed reservoir.

Telford, who was joined on Friday by U.S. Rep. Max Sandlin, D-Texas, and state Reps. Dr. Bob Glaze of Gilmer and Mark Homer of Paris, made public his request to the Region D Northeast Texas Water Planning Group to withdraw the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir from the regional water plan because of a lack of existing information on the strong economic impacts the reservoir would have on Northeast Texas.

"There are too many questions and not enough answers and until we have firm. hard

data ... it is simply not the right time for Marvin Nichols," said Sandlin.

Some of the issues Sandlin said that needed to be addressed include the impact of intensified conservation plans in urban areas, the potential cost of under utilized sources such as Lake Texoma or the technology of desalinization and a study on the devastating effects that the reservoir would have on the timber industry in East Texas.

"The timber industry is vital to the tax structure of both city and county governments," said Sandlin.

Telford even had an opponent run against him in the March primary simply because he would not take a stand on the Marvin Nichols issue.

In a Jan. 6, 2002, Bowie County Citizens Tribune article, Telford's Democratic opponent, Gary English stated, "I am ready to take a stand. My wishes are and will be the same as the people's wishes. I do not have to sit on the fence and think about it."

Dan Teafatiller, who is running on the Republican ticket and will face Telford in the Nov. 5 general election, has stated that he also is opposed to the lake.

In the same article, Teafatiller stated, "The Bowie County vote on Proposition 19 showed that people are not in favor of building Marvin Nichols. I am going to attempt to stop it for many years and hopefully keep it from being built at all."

Since then however, Telford has been credited at Rotary Club meetings, Sulphur River Basin Authority meetings and even at a Texarkana Chamber of Commerce meeting for having a hand in protecting East Texas water rights.

In fact, at a Feb. 16, 2002, public forum in DeKalb, Telford told about 80 East Texans that a member of the legislature could not keep a reservoir from being built.

"In my mind the Junior Water Rights Doctrine is the most important issue surrounding the construction of this reservoir," Telford said at the forum. "This doctrine has been under assault by the metropolitan areas of the state for the past three sessions. Because I had very key leadership roles in the House, I was able to stop these moves from occurring. That is just the simple truth."

Telford concluded his statements Friday by stating that he would not be bullied into making a decision as important as this one for Northeast Texas.

"Even now, no one is saying no, never to this reservoir, we just want more information and until that is done, we can't endorse a project that could have had such serious effects," said Telford.

Telford, Sandlin and the other lawmakers intend to send a formal request to the Northeast Texas Regional Water Planning Group early next week.