

Water planning group moves funds for environmental study

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By JENNIFER VOSE, Sentinel staff

AUG. 15 -- The East Texas Regional Water Planning Group for Region I unanimously adopted a modified scope of work for their second planning cycle at a meeting Wednesday at the Nacogdoches Recreation Center.

The scope of work will move \$50,000 of the state funds provided for a hydrographic survey on Sam Rayburn Reservoir to study other environmental issues. Although that will leave the group unable to do the planned study at Sam Rayburn, George Campbell, chairman of the group, said, the project should receive high consideration when the Legislature meets again to determine how funding should be spent.

The group also approved a motion to send a letter to the Corps of Engineers requesting federal funding for a portion of the projects in the group's scope of work.

Campbell said the scope of work is a five-year plan to complete tasks which have been identified as necessary for water planning in East Texas. Studies will be conducted on topics such as water quality, water availability and environmental water needs. Funding for tasks identified in the scope of work comes from the Texas Water Development Board, he said.

The board also heard a report from Bill Roberts with the TWDB, a non-voting member of the water planning group. He reminded the water planning group that the deadline for reporting on their scope of work is Sept. 18.

"It appears this group is well on its way to meeting that deadline," he said.

Roberts also discussed opportunities for group members to attend workshops on municipal water conservation and public meetings on groundwater management areas.

The nearest groundwater management area meeting will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Sept. 25 at the Raddison Hotel, 2843 WNW Loop 323 in Tyler.

Roberts emphasized that a groundwater management area is different from a groundwater conservation district. The groundwater management areas to be designated by the TWDB in the future will not immediately have any authority to control groundwater. They will be cooperative efforts between districts in the identified area. There are no plans, at this time, to give groundwater management areas the authority to control groundwater, Roberts said.

The board also heard reports from liaisons with adjoining water planning groups on the status of legislation affecting water issues and on reservoir development. Dan Hardin with the TWDB made a presentation on population projects for 2006 and state water plans.