

March 8, 2005

Hon. Lois Finkelman, Chair  
Committee on Health, Environment, and Human Services  
Members of Dallas City Council  
1500 Marilla, Room 5EN  
Dallas, TX 75201

Dear Chairwoman Finkelman and Members of the Council:

Your decision on Wednesday whether to adopt a public policy and take appropriate actions that maximize use of existing developed water resources and decline harmful new reservoirs is not only likely to be the final environmental chapter in the legacy of Chairwoman Finkelman's tenure on the Council and that of other senior members leaving the council shortly, but will certainly rank among the most significant environmental votes cast by this committee and all current council members.

You literally have the chance to take a clear stand toward sparing 100,000 acres of East Texas bottomland ecosystems on the Sulphur and the Neches Rivers, or take a step toward drowning them forever.

The loss to date of Texas' once-vast bottomland hardwood ecosystem is of great concern not only in Dallas, not only in Texas, but nationwide. There is nationwide attention to preserving the remnants for future generations.

You have that chance. Thankfully, this shouldn't be a difficult choice, since you and other regional suppliers have many options for where to get the water your planners have said you'll need through your half-century planning horizon. New reservoirs are clearly unneeded, since the planners' projected volumes available from conservation, reuse, and utilizing existing reservoirs far exceeds the planners' projected need for additional water sources. Given that new reservoirs are clearly unneeded and the remaining bottomland ecosystems are clearly threatened, taking a stand for the environment would seem to be an easy matter.

Dallas is the lone supplier considering the notorious Fastrill Reservoir on the Neches that would drown some of the best remaining bottomland hardwood lands in Texas and threaten pending establishment of an extremely high-quality national wildlife refuge. Given that Dallas' own planners have shown no need for this new reservoir or any other, Dallas' pursuit of this impoundment is unwarranted.

This committee and this council at this time have the opportunity to spare acreage much greater than either all the designated Texas national forest wilderness or the designated Big Thicket National Preserve.

That any of us would have such an opportunity in our lifetimes is a blessing. That the choice to do so is made easy by the existence of so many other viable options should be a great comfort to prudent office-holders such as yourself who have studied the entire water-supply situation.

We're counting on you; let us know how we can help.

On behalf of tens of thousands of our Dallas-area and statewide members, and many more members nationwide, we ask you to clearly put forth strategies and studies that utilize conservation and existing sources, and clearly omit strategies and studies that includes any new reservoirs.

Sincerely,

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