

JESSE D. OLIVER

ATTORNEY • COUNSELOR • MEDIATOR

P.O. BOX 45673
DALLAS, TEXAS 75245-0673

TELEPHONE (214) 841-0531
FACSIMILE (214) 841-0536

January 7, 2004

The Honorable Laura Miller
and Council Members
Dallas City Hall
Dallas, Texas

RE: Meeting the Future Water Needs of Dallas

Dear Dr. Jones:

As a resident of the City of Dallas and a Trustee of Texas Committee on Natural Resources (TCONR), I encourage you not to support the city staff recommendation to appropriate \$600,000 in funding to participate with other agencies in a feasibility study for the Marvin Nichols Reservoir. As a person who had the misfortune of first moving to Dallas during the severe and record setting drought of the mid-1950's, I recognize as much as anyone the importance of adequate water resources to this region. However, adding new reservoirs alone does not reflect the complete answer. The number of river valleys available for flooding to create a reservoir is finite. At some point, it will become imperative that we look to more cost effective means of insuring our water sufficiency. Today, I ask you to look beyond the immediate solution of adding another reservoir and look at whether we are making the best use of the water resources we already have—both in terms of availability and consumption.

In North Texas, we represents the biggest users of water in Texas—an average of 207 gallons per person/day. For a family of four, that equals 302,220 gallons a year—with half of it going for lawns. Last year, you took a significant step towards reducing water consumption with the enactment of an ordinance providing for lawn watering restrictions. However, this represents just the tip of the iceberg of what can be achieved by a formal city sponsored water conservation program; El Paso's water conservation program dropped water consumption from 220 gallons per person daily in 1980 to 155 gallons in 2000. Between 1984 and 2000, San Antonio's programs resulted in a decrease from 213 gallons per person daily to 140. Austin's program is expected to take it below 150 gallons per person/day by 2030. Marvin Nichols Reservoir would provide about 553 million gallons of water per day. It is estimated that with a reasonable water conservation plan—reducing per person/day water consumption—North Texas could achieving savings that would exceed the amount of water to be pumped from Marvin Nichols Reservoir.

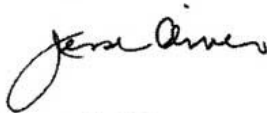
Clearly, water conservation can enhance water resources for the region and we ought to try it. But, there are some more pertinent issues with which you are faced—the availability of funds to meet the needs of aging infrastructure and future growth. In these difficult fiscal times, you wrestle with decisions on making the best use of limited resources. An initial investment of \$600,000 may not seem like much in the scope of Dallas' annual budget, but you might draw a perspective of that amount by considering those projects that you thought important that did not get funded in the current budget. Besides, the \$600,000 is only the down payment on Dallas' share of the \$1.6 cost of the Marvin Nichols Reservoir. Additionally, as we know, once government invests in something, it is a matter of pride to see it through. Last year, when *The Dallas Morning News* ran banner headlines about the millions of gallons of water missing/unaccounted for by Dallas Water Utilities, I chuckled to myself, thinking that the reporter had not ventured into those areas of the inner city where I had observed water bubbling up through the pavement from outdated and dilapidated water mains long after the winter freezes had past—where crews repaired one section only to receive reports of leaks in another aging section. Fortunately, funding has been identified to begin replacement of some of those transmission lines. How much more infrastructure could be replaced with the \$600,000 being sought for participation in the Marvin Nichols Reservoir feasibility study, or for that matter, with Dallas' one-third share of the currently projected \$1.6 billion cost of the Marvin Nichols Reservoir?

In conclusion, I urge you to make use of the ongoing water planning processes to consider other options that are likely to have positive benefits for all involved. The Region C Water Planning Group (North Central Texas)—through its \$1.9 million state-mandated water planning process—is only 17 months away from completing its Initially Prepared Plan that evaluates alternatives to Marvin Nichols Reservoir (due June 1, 2005, with final plan seven months later). The group is updating water demand projections, selecting/updating water management strategies based on changed conditions (including water conservation and drought management recommendations), assessing impacts of proposed projects on the environment and on water quality, and involving the public in plan adoption.

The question that requires a reasonably justified answer before you commit funding for a feasibility study is, "Why do we have to act now, 17 months before the Region C Water Planning Group completes its \$1.9 million state-mandated water planning process".

Thank you for your time, efforts and commitment to issues that continually affect our daily lives.

Very truly yours,



Jesse D. Oliver