

Staff Reports

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Stop playing politics with our water

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When it comes to regulating the state's water resources, common sense and cooperative study not politics ought to determine the direction and actions taken.

Yet, it seems the Texas Water Development Board appears to be more interested in appeasing Dallas and its water guzzling suburbs than making decisions that will ensure sufficient water resources for the Dallas area without sacrificing rural Northeast Texas communities.

The state water board has allocated funds for a Dallas region study for raising the levels of Wright Patman Reservoir on the Sulphur River. Yet, it has rejected a bid for funds that would allow Northeast Texas Regional Water Planning Group to participate in the study. That doesn't make sense considering the lake is in Northeast Texas.

Raising the levels of existing lakes will do less damage to the economy of Northeast Texas than building new lakes. Yet, new lakes are what is proposed by the water planning group in which Dallas and its suburbs reside.

There is a better way.

Further study would show that raising Lake Patman would help the area and also provide a water resource for Dallas, but the Northeast Texas Regional Water Planning Group is shutout of the process by not being allowed to participate in the study.

We agree with Mendy Rabicoff of Gregg County, who serves on the executive committee of the Northeast Texas water planning group.

"It doesn't make much sense that TWDB is sending money to another region to manage water resources in our region but doesn't respond to the needs for our region," Rabicoff said.

Rural vs. urban politics must end. The Northeast Texas water planning group is offering cooperation with the Dallas area group, but Texas Water Development Board doesn't seem to be interested.

As a proof, we point to a \$290,000 request for a project involving the evaluation of future water management strategies. The state board responded with \$59,065 an amount insufficient to get the job done. There are a number of other studies that need to be done, and we hope more consideration will be given to the needs of Northeast Texas.

We support the efforts of the Northeast Texas group that serves a 19-county area, and we call on the state water board to deal with all regional water planning boards in a fair and equal manner.

Northeast Texas Regional Water Planning Group officers plan to travel to Austin to meet with TWDB representatives. Our hope is that the state board will see the need for additional funding for projects essential to the 19-county area.

Our water resources are too important to play politics. The state water board has the resources to create a cooperative effort that ensures the Dallas area gets the water it needs and Northeast Texas preserves its land and lakes.