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Arkansas-side board passes resolution opposing Texas reservoir legislation

By Jodi Sheridan Texarkana Gazette

The Texarkana, Ark., Board of Directors on Monday passed a resolution in opposition to Texas legislation that may potentially include Marvin Nichols Reservoir development.

Meanwhile, legislation related to the reservoir had just come up for debate on the Texas House Floor at presstime Monday night. But after a few amendments, the House debate was adjourned until 10 a.m. today.

Texarkana International Paper mill communications manager Amanda Black Keeney said the Arkansas-side resolution couldn't come at a better time since the IP mill manager was in Austin urging legislators to leave the controversial reservoir out of Senate Bill 3.

She said while it may be a Texas bill, the reservoir, a plan by the state to address long-term water needs in the Dallas vicinity, would have effects on the jobs and water in both Arkansas and Texas.

"We thank you for standing with us and presenting a strong, united Texarkana," said Keeney Black.

The Arkansas-side resolution comes on the heels of the Texas-side city leaders passing a similar resolution at the urging of International Paper officials, who say the proposed Marvin Nichols reservoir is to them what Base Realignment and Closure was to Red River Army Depot.

According to IP mill officials, their manufacturing process requires a plentiful wood supply and adequate water flows to Lake Wright Patman.

Another reservoir on the Sulphur River would threaten those flows and destroy vast amounts of forest land, they say.

SB 3 passed out of the Senate containing language designating 19 reservoir sites as unique reservoir sites, including Marvin Nichols.

State Sen. Kevin Eltife, R-Tyler, was able to get hold of it before it left the Senate and tacked on an amendment guaranteeing Region D some of the water, assigning all construction costs to Region C and forming a joint committee to study water issues like mitigation to determine if Marvin Nichols and other reservoirs are really needed.

Region C includes the Dallas metroplex. Region D includes Bowie, Cass, Morris, Red River, Titus and 14 other counties.

Once in the House Natural Resources Committee, several amendments were approved, including one that struck Marvin Nichols from the bill.

However, it still faces the threat of being added back on once it gets to the House floor.

Late Monday, the legislators had just begun going through the task of going through about 80 amendments. That will continue today.

In other business, residents of Wade Trail brought forth a petition asking the city to fix the street within 90 days, since the street has hardly been improved since it was first constructed in 30 years.

Ward 5 Director Patsy Cornelius said the street was among the worst in her ward, and she hopes the city can fix it.