

Comments & Criticisms

We must continue to fight reservoir

A few months ago I shared with your readers why International Paper opposed the controversial Marvin Nichols Reservoir. I believe it is important to continue that conversation with our community and am thankful to this newspaper for the opportunity.

The State of Texas recently completed its legislative session with lawmakers approving a plan that designates a number of sites as “unique reservoir sites.” Included is Marvin Nichols Reservoir, which is proposed on the Sulphur River. The harmful effects of this reservoir are far-reaching—condemnation of land and homes, loss of revenue to the local economy and harmful effects to our industry. International Paper’s strong opposition to Marvin Nichols Reservoir is chiefly because it disrupts our access to two critically important raw materials required for the manufacture of our products and those products produced by others in the forest and paper products industry that dot our landscape from Ashdown, Ark., to New Boston, Jefferson, Domino, Texas, Valiant, Okla., and Mansfield, La.

For International Paper, Marvin Nichols would limit access to a plentiful wood supply and adequate water flows. We cannot exist without either.

Let me be clear. All of us at International Paper support plans that provide for the projected future growth of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. But we favor those smarter alternatives to Marvin Nichols that include thoughtful conservation, full utilization of existing reservoirs such as Texoma and Toledo Bend and raising lake levels at Wright Patman. Obtaining water from these existing reservoirs would more than provide for urban Texas and would avoid the detrimental effects to rural private landowners, farmers and our manufacturing plant.

Throughout this legislative session, we were awed by the support we received from the Texarkana, Texas, and Texarkana, Ark., governments and our many partners and community leaders. Your support enabled us to give voice to our concerns and strong opposition to Marvin Nichols. We thank you. And we are thankful for our East Texas legislators—especially State Sen. Kevin Eltife and State Rep. Stephen Frost, who were amazing champions for us all.

For 35 years IP has called this area home—providing so many with a means to take care of families and to give back to a community we hold dear. It is heartening to see so many offer a helping hand when we needed it most. Although the legislative session has ended, our work to stop this harmful reservoir continues.

Soon, a study commission will be jointly formed to engage the urban metroplex and our region in the effort of further study and review of the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir. The commission (comprised of three members from Region C and three members from Region D) will explore many of the options for which we have long been advocating and will ultimately report to our most senior elected officials no later than 2010. It will be this process, those reviews, that could ultimately force the removal of Marvin Nichols as a designated site. Leaders will begin discussion of how to form/establish representation on this joint study commission as early as this week at the Region D Regional Water Planning Group meeting at Mount Pleasant.

Join us as we work to develop a winning solution for all Texans. Please talk with your near

neighbors in urban north and northeast Texas and let them know we happily support their future growth and projected water needs. Through simple conservation techniques today, Dallas/Fort Worth will have ample water for tomorrow. For any shortfall, there exists today more than a million acrefeet of water per year available in Toledo Bend and another half million that could be made available in Lake Texoma. And beyond that there is the option of raising lake levels at Wright Patman.

Using existing reservoirs is a sensible, workable solution that does not pit urban against rural, enables working farm and ranch families to continue producing, protects strong manufacturing jobs here in our own backyards and preserves critical renewable natural resources like working forestlands. Help us share that message.

Again, thank you so much to this community for overwhelming support for our industry and the working women and men we employ. Although this debate is far from over, your support, which speaks volumes, is recognized and appreciated.

To learn more about this issue visit www.stopmarvinnichols.com.

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