

Steve Knight

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Hitting Home: Landowners Speak Up On What DFW's Lake Construction Would Mean

Steve Knight is the outdoor writer for the Tyler Paper.

I once knew a lady rancher in Sutton County who late each summer had carpenters come on the ranch and build supports under the low-hanging limbs of pecan trees around the headquarter's house. The supports were to protect the limbs from the weight of the pecans and the wild turkeys that roosted in them.

Two weeks ago I felt like those turkeys. I was perched precariously on a limb. I wasn't sure how strong it was.

I was challenging the Dallas-Fort Worth's self-proclaimed rights to the East Texas countryside where they seek to build lakes to quench their ever-growing thirst.

It didn't take long to learn that there was a lot of support under those limbs. From DFW to the Red River, letters of disdain for the announced lake projects came flying in, and continue to do so. They came from landowners, politicians, environmentalists and just folks.

Here is some of what a few said.

"We are retired folks from Collin County, relocated to Delta County because of the less stressful lifestyle about two years ago. We were not informed that this was even a possibility. We feel empathy for the folks in the Metroplex, but first feel they should be good stewards of their resources before they gobble up our land."

Ed & Reba Houghtlin, Lake Creek

"As a manager for a small water supply corporation here in East Texas I know the importance of conserving your resources. I often tell folks about the success San Antonio and El Paso have had with conserving water. The Metroplex seems intent on ignoring these successes and determined to force their will on us peons. What they are forgetting is that East Texas was no man's land for many years with no law to speak of and full of folks ready to fight at the drop of a hat! That spirit still runs strong in some of us and we will fight these boondoggles to the bitter end."

Robert Speight, president The Greater Caddo Lake Association

"This is the total sum of the story that we have to convey to the rest of the state, and somehow try to make them understand. Just because Dallas has worked themselves up into a mega-population, it doesn't give them the right to go into other parts of the state to take land from other Texans. Especially with the DFW area being the water hogs of the State.

"Northeast Texas doesn't want to see Dallas not get water, but we do want them to take water that is already impounded in other reservoirs, after they get their consumption rates down to the state mandated average. One of the Dallas water providers told us early on that 'we are not in the business of saving water, we are in the business of selling water.' This is the attitude they have taken toward conservation.

"I think our state Rep. Stephen Frost might have gotten the message through to many of his colleagues this session. If not for some of the dirty maneuvers that were made on the floor, Fastrill and Marvin Nichols would not be on the list of designated sites."

Shirley Shumake, Sulphur River Oversight Society, DeKalb

"I just read your article on the Marvin Nichols lake. It is a wonderful article. However, it only mentions Marvin Nichols and Fastrill. It doesn't even mention the ones being proposed on the North Sulphur river area (between Sulphur Springs and Paris). There is a lot of farmland here that will also be taken away. At some point we need to include the names of all these reservoirs being proposed.

"If the Parkhouse I & II become reality they will take in a considerable amount of Delta County. We live here and my husband farms approximately 5,000 acres. This will all be taken along with our home, if the maps are correct that I have seen. So, this will not only affect Fastrill and Marvin Nichols area people."

Teresa Burt, Delta County

"As a sixth generation East Texan, my family and our land will be affected by Marvin Nichols. Personal responsibility for all of us Texans seems to have gone by the wayside and has been replaced by greed. When is enough, enough indeed?"

Donna (Dyer) McFarland, Franklin County

"I enjoyed your article regarding water usage, conservation flows and the 'David vs. Goliath' aspect of Dallas vs. East Texas. Critical thinking and analysis of this sort should trump the 'sound bite' school of thinking."

Richard Anderson, County Judge, Harrison County

"We live in the very small town of Douglassville that's on the south side of Sulphur River and Lake Wright Patman. It is a town of less than 200 population. Within the surrounding area of the town we have a 400-acre farm that has been cared for and worked for three generations and even though my husband worked more than 30 years in public work, he never missed a day of the week taking care of the farm. The cattle never knew that he

had another job other than seeing and taking care of the pastures, feed, water and health.

"You see those are the jobs and hours that the city people have no concept of. It doesn't matter that you might have worked 12 hours, come home, been in the bed two hours and had to get up and go pull a calf to save the calf and the cow.

"All of our farm could easily be taken in the mitigation of Marvin Nichols. What has happened to this world that our forefathers worked so hard for and passed down the desire to keep working to preserve for generations that someone can just come and take it away from us?

"The uncertainty of all this wears on your every thought."

David and Charleen Granberry, Douglassville

"Texas has lost sight of reasoned sustainable growth. Water is the new oil, and the water barons will bring drastic changes to our state and the nation. East Texas is worth fighting for - count me in!"

Rick Michaels

"I have been on the campaign to stop the reservoirs Fastrill and Marvin Nichols, and I will continue to fight against it. Not because I have land to lose, but because I am tired of seeing our open spaces and wildlife disappearing."

Julie Stroup Rutjes

"I moved to East Texas in 1988 to get away from the growth sprawl in and around Orlando where I grew up. Thank you for the education on the issue. The only thing I thought I knew was, that someday I might be owning lakefront property. Not a bad advertising trick for the unsuspecting consumer, but I do prefer the thick woods and bird songs to the tourist industry.

"Some days I can't believe that Florida has not sunk into the ocean, but there is still hope. That would certainly renew the wetlands there if that does ever happen. With every new "sink hole" I remain ever hopeful."

Kay Caton

These are the comments and stories that the politicians and other East Texans should hear from the people who have a dog in the fight other than the city of Dallas and its lobbyists. You know, dance with the ones that brung 'em if only for a minute.

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