

Dam to provide water for coast

Neither Bryan nor College Station foresees a need for water supply from Millican Lake and neither city supports the dam. But the Brazos River Authority (BRA) says the lake is needed to prepare for future water needs in the Brazos River Basin.

"The big water requirements are near the coast," says Carson H. Hoge, assistant general manager of the BRA. "There are no sources in the coastal areas to meet the future water needs."

The BRA has a master plan of 23 reservoirs, of which eight are completed, two are under construction and three (including Millican) are being designed.

Of the eight completed dams, only Lake Waco is used exclusively for local needs. The others are part of a basin-wide water supply system. If Millican is built, the BRA can use the water downstream to help the coast. It would also relieve other reservoirs which are now committed to the coast and free

those reservoirs for local needs.

In a resolution dated March 5, the BRA Board of Directors said new large-scale needs for water will have to come from new dams. The resolution says all but 75,000 acre-feet per year from the basin is committed and all but 50,000 of acre-feet per year long-range needs are committed.

Cornelius van Bavel, chairman of the Environmental Action Council, says the BRA is only selling 28 percent of its available water supply — in other words, commitments are grossly inflated.

For instance, the BRA is permitted to sell 225,000 acre-feet of water through its 200-mile canal system in the coastal counties of Brazoria, Galveston and Fort Bend.

Last year, the BRA signed commitments to supply roughly 25,000 acre-feet more than their permitted supply. But commitment contracts are usually based on maximum needs, so the BRA actually sold 167,000 acre-feet — well below its capacity.

But the coastal area is looking for more surface water supplies for its cities, farms and large petrochemical plants. The reason is subsidence.

As well water is pumped from the sandy layers, the sand draws water from neighboring clay. The clay is then pressed together as upper layers of soil sink.

"In the past 30 years the Houston Ship Channel area has sunk by as much as 7.5 feet. The San Jacinto Monument is now 6.5 feet lower than 30 years ago, a drop of 3.5 occurring in the past 10 years," says a report from the TAMU Texas Water Resources Institute.

This subsidence, according to the same report, has cost the Houston-Pasadena area \$113 million in damage and property losses.

Although Houston is not in BRA territory and does not buy BRA water, subsidence is also a problem at the mouth of the Brazos. It is a problem which developers must solve soon. One answer is to use water which is already above ground.

Hoge says the BRA has been asked to supply 25,000 acre-feet per year to a proposed refinery near Richmond (Fort Bend County) and 5,000 acre-feet per year to Alcoa Corp. for its Rockdale lignite site.

Another 25,000 to 39,000 acre-feet per year will be committed to two power plants from the Texas Utilities Generating Co. These needs can be met through other reservoirs now in the planning and construction stages, but the BRA does not want to be caught short.

"It is most probable," says Hoge, "that by the time Millican Lake is completed, all the water supply yields dependably available from other authority reservoirs will have been specifically committed. Additional needs not now foreseen will

have to be met from Millican."

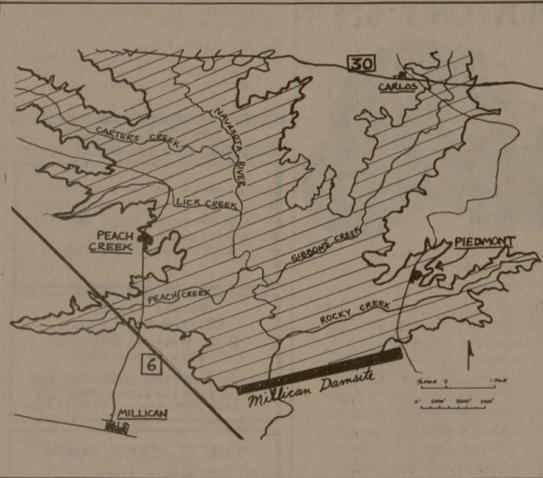
"We cannot agree with the idea of destroying some 100,000 rural acres to encourage further sprawl of a polluted industrial complex on the Gulf Coast," counters an EAC report. The report notes that the BRA sells 85 percent of its purchased water to utilities.

Millican will yield 167,000 acre-feet per year. College Station, Bryan and Navasota do not foresee a need for the reservoir, but none will

discount the possibility of using the water.

College Station City Manager North Bardell says College Station could use the lake as an independent water supply instead of buying from Bryan and Texas A&M as it does now. The threat of an independent source could at least lead to a better bargaining position for College Station, he says.

(Tomorrow: water quality and flood control)



Lower half of proposed Millican Reservoir

Landowners protest

(Continued from Page 1)

Waltrip is not a member of the landowners association. He says he has no opinion on the Millican subject as such, since he says it will be built sooner or later anyway. The land is an investment and any plans for future development are uncertain at the moment.

Those persons who do understand the various plans and elevations express concern about the projected condition of the relatively shallow lake.

John E. Moody, 89, lives along Gibbons Creek. The creek would be the largest arm of the reservoir because of its broad flat bottomland.

Moody has farmed, ranched, raised wild pigs and worked on the railroad in the area along Gibbons

Creek. He says he can't understand why anyone would want to build a lake there.

"It ain't for a thing in the world but a place to fish," he says, looking out on land that conceivably could be under 20 feet of water within the decade. "If they build that dam it'll be a big mistake. Gonna need money, money, money."

His son, Evans Moody, lives nearby in the community of Piedmont. The 75-person community would lie under water according to Corps of Engineer plans.

A Grimes County surveyor, Moody Jr. said Millican "will be too shallow to do much good. You need hills and there just aren't that many in the area."

"It's gonna be more of less a snake pond," he suggested. Most of his own 3,500 acres would be flooded by the reservoir.

Now, the landowners have gathered further support for their cause from local governmental bodies and the Brazos County Environmental Action Council.

(Bryan voted to oppose the dam because of lignite coal deposits in the area, while the College Station city council voted to neither support nor oppose the plans. Both had supported the project in the past.) (Tomorrow: Land development and lignite mining.)

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