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Army scraps lake plans at Millican

By GARY WELCH
Battalion Staff

Original plans for Millican Dam, which provided for a large recreational lake just five miles east of College Station, were effectively scrapped last month by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps of Engineers abandoned the site after almost 18 years of controversy over the proposed dam and reservoir. Arguments for the lake have ranged from recreational benefits to flood control. Groups opposed to the lake have cited large lignite coal deposits, high construction costs and damages to wildlife as reasons not to build the dam.

It appears that opposition groups have won, at least for the present.

"We have determined it wasn't feasible to build at that site," said Jim Hair, chief of the Corps of Engineers' program de-

in the ground, some estimates have gone as high as \$3 billion. Still, the value remains controversial.

"Placing a value on lignite is like placing a value on a gold mine," said Jim Herbert of the Corps of Engineers. With the present concern over energy in the United States the lignite could become extremely valuable in the future, he said. On the other hand, the coal vein could be much smaller than expected and be worth much less.

To determine the extent of the lignite deposits, Congress appropriated \$179,000 in 1976 for a Corps of Engineers study of the site. All other Millican studies were suspended until Congress could make a decision on the dam site.

The study was submitted to Congress in Oct. 1976. Congress determined that the lignite was too valuable to cover up with water, so the original Millican site was abandoned.

Other monetary costs were considered in the decision to reject the Millican dam site.

Oil and gas reserves in the area, virtually unknown until two years ago, are being tapped at an increasing rate. Since the cost of the dam project would include buying the land to be inundated, the project's price has gone up considerably because the prices of oil- and gas-laden land is very high.

"Payments made to landowners would be at going market prices," Herbert said. "I think it is mostly privately-owned land."

Cornelius van Bavel, a member of the local Environmental Action Council, said covering the land would be unaffordable because of the high prices that would now be demanded.

"The potential value of the land is run-

ning at thousands of dollars per acre," he said.

"The whole thing is irrelevant anyway," van Bavel said. "It's an oil field, and you don't put an oil field under water."

Projected construction costs for the dam now stand at \$189 million, Hair said. Annual inflation rates are pushing costs up constantly, so any delays mean cost increases.

Non-monetary costs also played a large part in defeating the Millican project, and will probably be just as difficult to over-

come for any future dams on the Navasota River. These costs are qualitative instead of quantitative and are difficult to evaluate for a cost-benefit analysis.

Covering the land with water will destroy many wildlife. Van Bavel said it does not matter where the lake is located because the habitats would be destroyed anyway.

Mitigation lands, which are set aside somewhere in the state replace the inundated habitats, are often inferior to the original land and thus considered inadequate. Even if the mitigation lands are

adequate, they can never actually replace the flooded habitats.

Environmental groups have also been concerned about the sediments that would build up behind the dam. Trapped sediments would not travel downstream and eventually out into the Gulf of Mexico. As a result, natural shoreline recession at the mouth of the Brazos River would be accelerated.

Col. Walter Wells of the Brazos River Authority said the Brazos River has enough of a sediment load to keep shoreline recession close to normal.

"There's always a damn good sediment load in the Brazos," Wells said.

However, recent figures have shown that the shoreline is receding 13 feet per year, an unusually high rate.

The Corps of Engineers has previously stated four major benefits expected from Millican or a similar Navasota River reservoir.

Recreation would be the main benefit. Fishing, boating, and other open-water recreation has been planned extensively for the lake.

Money from outside commercial interests would satisfy a second proposed benefit termed "area redevelopment." It would involve improving the economic well-being of the area with public and private recreation expenditures.

Flood control and water supply benefits are considered secondary to recreational opportunities but are still important.

Wells said that to fully use existing lignite deposits, water from the proposed reservoir would be needed to cool electrical generating plants powered by lignite. Since lignite must be used immediately before it undergoes internal combustion, the plants would have to be near the extraction site.

Because of the tremendous cost involved, any dam projects near the Millican site are probably. Not only are the economic costs higher than any foreseeable benefits from the dam, but qualitative costs are also high.

The demand for energy in the United States may be too great to allow a water project to get in the way. Though the proposed benefits from a lake would enhance both the economic and social well-being of this area, the dam will probably never materialize.

News analysis

development branch. But the Corps of Engineers is now examining six possible sites ranging from 10 to almost 50 river miles upstream of the original site. Shifting the proposed lake sites upstream insures that none of the lignite deposits in the area will be covered by a future lake and rendered useless.

Lignite has proved to be Millican's largest stumbling block since the site was chosen in 1960. Whenever analyzed from a cost-benefit point of view, the predicted value of the lignite alone has consistently outweighed any possible benefits that could be expected from the lake.

Although the precise value of the soft coal is difficult to determine while it is still

Citizens' group okays proposal

By JEANNE LOPEZ

After four weeks of studying a suggested list of proposals, the College Station Citizens' Capital Improvements Committee voted Monday to present to College Station voters an \$8 million bond issue this May.

The purpose of the Capital Improvements Committee is to decide what improvements will receive priority in the May 6 bond election. Voter approval is still needed to enact these proposals.

Committee members approved a \$7.7 million water and sewer utility improvements proposal that would enable College Station to drill three water wells and transfer the water to reservoir tanks and distribute it throughout the city.

The city will also tie the Northgate sewer line to a separate line for treatment at the North Creek Outfall plant.

The sewer line that is currently shared with Bryan is inadequate and often overloads. Last October the College Station City Council proposed upgrading the presently shared line to overcome the overload problem, but the Bryan City Council rejected the idea and suggested a merger of the two cities. However, both cities failed to reach an agreement and will sever utility agreements in January 1979.

A \$300,000 street maintenance program was approved by the committee. The fund would be annually supported by approximately \$150,000 from a general city budget.

Extension of Kyle Avenue to Dominik Street also received committee approval. The \$230,000 reconstruction of Kyle Avenue will alleviate the flow of southbound traffic on Texas Avenue, said Elrey Ash, city engineer.

The committee approved a \$1.7 million proposal for the acquisition and development of park lands. Approximately 143 acres of land would be bought by College Station for future development. Presently owned city parks would be further developed.

A 50-acre tract is sought for acquisition as a future athletic complex in the southeast section of College Station. The area is bounded by Texas Avenue, Highway 30, and the Highway 6 bypass.

Another 50-acre tract is proposed in the Southwood Valley area along with an additional 10-15 acres for a smaller park.

The 14-acre Holik park tract located south of the Dexter Drive and Holleman Drive intersection is also proposed for acquisition. Fifteen acres of land bounded by Highway 60, Highway 6, and Highway 30 are sought for park acquisition.

Committee members rejected a suggestion from the College Station Fire Chief Doug Landua to purchase \$347,000 worth of fire equipment. Landua proposed the purchase of a ladder truck, rescue pumper, and a grass fire truck at last week's capital improvements meeting. Members agreed that the 3-6 year life of the equipment would make it a "questionable item to be financed by a bond."

Committee Chairman Gary Halter said he will prepare a report of the improvements and present it to the College Station City Council next week. The council will then hold a public hearing to hear citizen comment on the committee's suggestions.

Senate closes doors to hear persistent drug charges

By NICHOLS DANILOFF

WASHINGTON - The Senate closes its doors behind closed doors today to hear a report from the Senate Intelligence Committee on persistent charges that high Panamanian officials aided and abetted drug trafficking.

Opponents of two pending treaties transferring control and operations of the Panama Canal to Panama by the year 2000 argued the drug issue would prove damaging enough to sway undecided votes to their side and defeat ratification.

But some Senate sources said Monday the report would conclude the drug allegations had no effect on the outcome of the treaty negotiations.

Sen. Birch Bayh, D-Ind., chairman of the intelligence panel, was to deliver the report which also was expected to conclude the bugging of Panamanian officials by U.S. intelligence sources, a surveillance operation administration officials denied last fall, did not affect the negotia-

About a dozen senators were briefed Monday by the committee staff in preparation for the secret session.

Sen. Charles Percy, R-Ill., a treaty supporter, said after the briefing the drug issue was a legitimate concern but should not obscure the long-term benefits the treaties would serve.

Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., a treaty critic, said after the same briefing: "My concerns are pretty much the same."

Dole has argued that if the drug allegations are proved true, doubt is cast on Panama's ability to act as the guarantor of the Panama treaties.

"I still don't think we have all the information," he told reporters. "Maybe there is more to be seen. Hopefully, the Senate will see fit to make it public."

A UPI inquiry turned up a raft of new allegations about the "Panama connection." Many of these allegations were developed by treaty critics, but have not been denied by administration officials.

Among allegations uncovered by UPI:

It's only vanilla...

Ol' Duke (right) is polite enough not to extend his tongue as Mike Tynes eats an ice cream cone. Tynes is a freshman electrical engineering major

from Kerrville and Duke is owned by Tynes' brother John.

Battalion photo by LaDonna Young

Independent pushes talks, violence marks coal strike

By KENNETH R. CLARK

United Press International
An independent coal operator capitulated to the United Mine Workers Monday, offering a contract that officials said may provide the first crack in the stubborn impasse between the union and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association.

The first break in the bitter violence-packed walkout by 160,000 coal miners came with approval by the UMW bargaining council of a pact with the Pittsburg and Midway coal Co. — a non-BCOA independent. The contract covers 700 workers in western Kentucky, Missouri and Kansas, who still must vote to accept it.

President Carter has been poised to intervene in the strike in one of three ways — invocation of the Taft-Hartley Act, federal seizure of the coal fields or binding arbitration. With the Pittsburg and Midway settlement, however, the White House expressed hope for a thaw in frozen negotiations.

Presidential press secretary Jody Powell called it "an interesting development

which all parties should assess seriously."

UMW officials also hailed the pact. "BCOA should begin to realize their position is deteriorating," said a union spokesman. "There is no way UMW could settle for anything significantly less than this contract."

While their leaders maneuvered in Washington, militant miners applied muscle in the field.

Late Monday night, more than 200 miners in Ohio attacked a non-union mining company that had shipped 15 loads of coal during the day. The miners blocked a highway to the plant, hurled rocks overturned trucks before they were dispersed by state police and sheriff's deputies.

In West Virginia, newsmen Jerry Sander of WSAZ-TV in Huntington surrendered film he shot of miners overturning empty coal trucks in Lawrence County after about 350 miners confronted him and demanded it.

In Alabama, a coal truck was disabled by a gunshot through a rear tire, and in Virginia a homemade bomb was found near the gate of the Paramount Mining Co. near Josephine. State police said a faulty battery kept it from going off.

Gene Oiler, president of UMW Local 1886 in Meigs County, Ohio, applauded the violence.

"I do condone it," he said. "They went out to shut down these non-union places. These non-union people take a chance being out on the road during a nationwide coal strike."

In Indiana, school officials prepared to trim hours in chilly classrooms as the energy famine brought coal supplies near

the 40-day mark, mandating a 50 percent reduction in electricity use by schools.

Delco Electronics Division, which employs 11,000 workers in Kokomo, Ind., said it will announce "inevitable" production cutbacks and layoffs Thursday.

In Kansas City, the Missouri Public Service Company said it will require all its industrial customers to reduce electric consumption two days a week, starting next week, to conserve nearly exhausted coal supplies.

Economic program gets union support

By DREW VON BERGEN

United Press International
BAL HARBOUR, Fla. - After supporting part of President Carter's economic program — including limits on the three-martini business lunch — while criticizing other aspects, the AFL-CIO Executive Council turns its attention today to trade legislation.

In the second day of their week-long, mid-winter meeting, the 34 council members also will hear from Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP.

Organized labor has been especially critical of U.S. corporations shifting production to other nations to take advantage of low wages and special tax breaks.

The AFL-CIO points to a recent Labor Department report showing about 550,000

American workers lost their jobs as a direct result of such action, and plans to support special legislation aimed at stemming that tide.

In Monday's two-hour session, the council adopted its own \$29.5 billion economic stimulus program, disagreeing with the Carter administration over a proposed \$8.4 billion business tax cut for fiscal 1979, but going along with it on such items as wiping out income tax deductions for state sales and gasoline taxes.

The council also decided to support the administration in efforts to limit business deductions for meals, popularly referred to by the administration as the "three-martini lunch."

In giving its support, however, the council recommended a three-year, phase-in period to prevent job losses in the food service field.

"We're opposed to a certain number of citizens of this country having the right to have a three-martini lunch, or a two-martini lunch, or wait have you, and have the taxpayer pay for it," said AFL-CIO President George Meany.

But Meany would not back President Carter's plan for deceleration of wages and prices.

"All of these ideas are a step toward controls, wage and price controls, and we are opposed to control, period," Meany said. "No matter what form they may take."

The council also was opposed to increases in the Social Security tax and said it would like the tax rolled back from its current 6.05 percent to 5.85 percent. Next year, the tax is scheduled to increase to 6.13 percent.

Four die in plane crash

United Press International

LUBBOCK, Texas - A light plane apparently trying to land at a small airport crashed in the median between the north and south bound lanes of a highway Monday, killing four men in their early 20s.

The dead were not immediately identified. No one on the ground was injured. Officials said the plane had touched down at the Town and County Airport and then skidded off the icy runway.

Raymond Rauls, 22, who saw the crash, said the pilot managed to pull the nose of the plane back into the air but that even as it climbed "it started falling apart."

Rauls said the pilot tried to make a shallow turn to get back to the runway but the plane hit a high power line and crashed.

The aircraft came down in the median of a highway about one block south of the city limits.

The fire department was called to the scene to pull the bodies out of the wreckage. There was no fire. Officials said it took about an hour and a half to remove the bodies.