

## State and Local

# Concern over poor water quality in Texas shown at conference

By Bob Grube  
Staff Writer

An expression of deep concern over Texas water quality flowed through every presentation at the first session of the 21st Water for Texas Conference on Friday.

The conference was sponsored by the Texas Water Resources Institute at Texas A&M.

Dr. Rick T. Irvin, a professor in the Department of Veterinary Anatomy at Texas A&M, said while Texas' economy is getting a boost from the arrival of many high-tech firms to its version of Silicon Valley, the high-tech industry is a major contaminator of Texas waters.

"Many people associate water contamination with the steel or petrochemical industries because they have dirty manufacturing processes," Irvin said. "People tend to think of the semiconductor industry as a contaminator because of its ultra-clean environment."

But Irvin said the semiconductor industry uses several toxic chemicals that are common to another major

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— Rick T. Irvin, A&M veterinary anatomy professor.

contaminator of water, the petrochemical industry.

Thousands of gallons of toxic chemicals such as acid baths, glycol ethers, dopants (gases of arsenic) and the carcinogen trichloroethylene are produced by the semiconductor industry every week, Irvin said.

Irvin said the problem is in the way the industry disposes of these toxic chemicals.

"The individual firms are very responsive once the problems have been identified," Irvin said, "but the major problem is that few government agencies have set up regulatory agencies for this industry."

Irvin said that in a study of 80 semiconductor manufacturing sites, 64 had contaminated subsurface and

ground water supplies and 71 had contaminated drinking water supplies.

Irvin said he thinks the answer to Texas' economic recovery lies both in attracting new industry to the state and in cleaning up Texas' water.

"We must undertake a pro-active approach to controlling water problems in Texas," Irvin said. "We need to make Texas an attractive place for these emerging industries to come so we can end the state's dependence on the oil and agriculture industries."

"The new industries will not come to the state if our water is dirty."

While economics is a major concern of the state these days, Kenneth W. Kramer, a state Capitol representative of the Lone Star chapter of the

Sierra Club in Austin, said he believes ecology also is important.

"I know clean water when I see it," Kramer said. "Unfortunately, what is clean enough is a political decision and not really a technical decision."

Kramer said Texas waters do not come close to meeting the cleanliness standards set by the 1972 Federal Clean Water Act.

He said Texas has failed to enforce existing water quality standards, has water quality standards that are too low, and has lowered standards for some streams to meet existing stream conditions.

"I find this particularly appalling," Kramer said. "We have the technology to clean the water to any level we want, but what constrains our ability to clean the water is our willingness to commit resources to do it."

Kramer said besides agriculture, the Texas tourism industry depends on the state's ecology. Tourism is the state's second largest industry.

# A&M gets funds for dorm renovations

Barton announces \$3.5 million federal loan

By Mike Sullivan  
Staff Writer

U.S. Rep. Joe Barton said Friday that Texas A&M will receive a \$3.5 million low-interest federal loan to help pay its \$28 million dormitory renovation bill.

The money will go toward aiding the renovation of the 16 Corps-style dorms.

Twelve are located on the Quad-range and four are on the north side of campus.

Barton said the \$3.5 million loan, which will be paid back over 20 years with an interest rate of 3 percent,

was the largest made to any university this year under the Housing Act of 1950.

Eddie Joe Davis, A&M vice president for fiscal affairs, said most of the rest of the money for the renovation project will come from \$20 million worth of housing revenue bonds sold by A&M, and about \$5 million more will come from dormitory systems revenues.

Barton said the money should be available to A&M early this week. Renovation of the 50-year-old Corps-style dorms will not begin un-

til next May and should be completed in about four years.

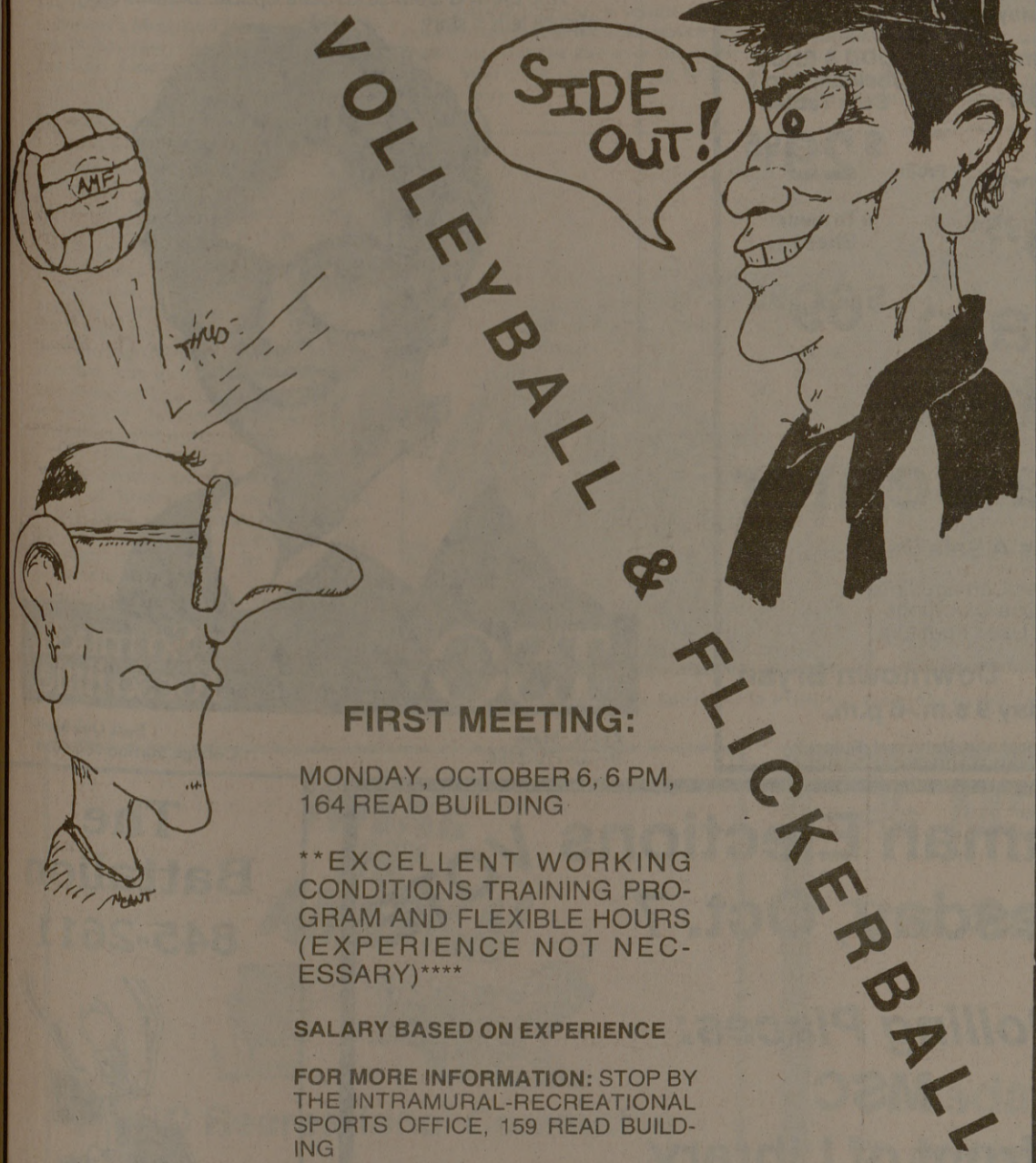
The dorms originally were built with federal money during the New Deal era. The dorms, which are home to about 3,600 students, will be closed and remodeled two at a time, and the residents will be moved into other campus housing until the dorms are finished, Barton said.

The project not only will modernize the dorms and make them more efficient, but also will extend the buildings' lives by about 40 to 50 years, Barton said.



Rep. Joe Barton

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