

HERALD BANNER

Ladonia area residents oppose planned lake

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LADONIA— Meeting under the Fannindel Falcons scoreboard in the high school gym, it was easy to tell the “visitors” from the “home” team as representatives from the Upper Trinity Water District tried to make points with locals on the merits of the proposed Lake Ralph Hall.

The engineers, attorneys and other professionals promoting the lake produced pamphlets, a PowerPoint presentation and had the figures at hand to try and prove the economics of the project at the Monday night meeting.

But the people whose Fannin County homes would be inundated with water weren’t ready to give up hope of defeating the proposal.

“The dam for this will be right on my place, the house I’ve called home for three years,” said Chester Debord, who said he moved to the Ladonia area 13 years ago because it reminded him of the farm where he grew up.

“I don’t want to lose my land. I’m too old to build another one and too old to move,” Debord said.

He also questioned why water couldn’t be pumped from Lake Wright Patman or Lake Texoma rather than disrupting the livelihoods of those in this rural area.

“These people in Dallas run their sprinklers when its raining and water runs down the city gutters deep enough to float a canoe,” Debord said.

However, Tom Taylor, executive director of the Upper Trinity group said conservation was only one element of bringing sufficient water supplies to the Denton County cities that would receive most of the water from Lake Ralph Hall.

“I’ve tried to imagine the ideal site for a lake,” Taylor said before enumerating more than a dozen attributes, including what he called “minimal adverse effects.”

“And this site meets everyone of these elements,” he said.

The customers his group serves in the growing Denton County area are expected to mushroom from roughly 150,000 persons to more than one million within the next 50 years.

“The area we serve is growing, so we must find adequate supplies of water,” Taylor said.

He likened building Lake Ralph Hall to building an investment portfolio, which already includes Lake Ray Roberts, Lake Lewisville and Chapman Lake.

Ladonia area residents John and Leslie Adams said the impact on the area would be more than minimal. They stand to lose at least half of their own land, which they bought in 2000.

“They still haven’t come up with definitive boundaries, so they really don’t know what they’re doing,” John Adams said.

“But you can be sure it is going to take taxable property off the rolls which will have to be made up somewhere, plus we’ll need more deputies around the lake at additional cost. We moved out here from Dallas for the peace and quiet, but when the trucks start rolling in, that will all be lost.”

An engineer for the Upper Trinity district said the lake would take up a total of approximately 11,000 acres. About 3,700 acres of that would not be underwater, but would be land surrounding the lake itself.

That caused resident Mike Yarbrough to ask where the economic benefit would be for Fannin County.

“If that’s in a band around the lake, where are the lakeside homes going to be? Where is the commercial development?,” Yarbrough asked.

Ladonia Mayor Leon Hurse has promoted the lake as a way to build the area economy.

“We’ve supported this since year one. In fact, we’re the one that got it started in 1995,” said Hurse. “In my opinion, it will not only provide for the future water needs of this area, but will give us an economic boom.”

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality attorney Janet Hudson said opposition to the lake could move the issue to a

contested hearing.

“We’ve had two to three dozen requests for a contested case,” Hudson said. “If it comes to that, it will be like a trial before a judge.”

The Texas Committee on Natural Resources, an Austin-based environmental group, has also joined the opposition to Lake Ralph Hall and to the proposed Marvin Nichols reservoir near Mount Pleasant.

The initial water use permit application for Lake Ralph Hall was filed in September 2003.

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