

North Texans

HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE THE AIR WE BREATHE, WATER WE DRINK

The long, hot Texas summers bring more than family trips to water parks and barbecues by the pool. Beginning as early as May, the local media forewarn of ozone alert days and caution residents to limit water use. Even with the record rainfall of the past two years, the regions should not rest on its laurels, but must work together to conserve water and reduce emissions.

Water is Texas' Liquid Gold

Water has long been the state's most scarce commodity. In this recession-weary time, Texas is being hailed as one of the recession-proof states. This is a positive in terms of economic growth; however, if future water supplies are not made a priority today, a projected future supply-demand gap would quickly put our region at a disadvantage in years to come.

With regional water use continuing to climb due to tremendous population growth, it is imperative for conservation to rise to the forefront of everyday life, and for the region to implement water supply strategies to meet the growing need.

Texas' Region C Water Planning Group, which is responsible for developing and refining the regional water plan for North Central Texas, has stated that conservation alone cannot sustain the region and protect it from the devastating economic and social impact of a severe water shortage.

The Region C Water Plan, adopted in December 2005 by the Region C Water Planning Group, sets forth specific strategies for insuring that this region has an adequate water supply to serve its citizens and businesses through the year 2060. The balanced, cost-effective plan includes a wide range of Water Management

Strategies such as:

- Increased conserva-

tion

- Reuse and recycle projects
- Connection of existing supplies
- Development of needed new sources of water, including reservoirs.

There is not one strategy alone that will alleviate the strains put on North Texas' water reserves. One critical strategy is implementation of a conservation and re-use plan, which is projected to reduce the average per capita municipal water demand in Region C by 29% over the next 20 years, meeting the benchmark established by the Texas Water Conservation Implementation Task Force. The plan developed by the Reservoir C Water Planning Group would result in 26% of the region's 2060 water supply coming from conservation and re-use.

Additionally, North Texas must plan for other strategies, such as new reservoirs, to guard against unforeseen problems with plan implementation and to provide a reasonable surplus in case of unanticipated changes in demand or unusually severe droughts. As a result, the Regional Water Plan also calls for 18% of the 2060 supply to come from needed new reservoirs.

Why do we, as business and community leaders, need to be concerned about North Texas' water supply? Because the region is already the state's most populous and is experiencing the highest growth of any region in the nation, and because failing to provide water to serve this growth has huge costs. It would reduce the projected North Texas 2060 population by more than 1 million people (or 7.7%); the projected 2060 employment by 17% (or 691,060 jobs); the projected income by 2060 by \$58.8 billion (or 21%); and income and tax receipts by a combined \$160 billion.

When faced with these facts, it's easy to see that water is as good as gold.

North Texas Strives to Breathe Easier

When the Texas heat rises, it can be easily felt on the backs of our necks and in our lungs. News reports warn that high ozone alert days can be especially hard on children, the elderly and anyone with respiratory problems, but, if not alleviated, poor air quality can begin to hamper even the healthiest.



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In 2004, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated in North Texas counties as an 8-hour, non-attainment area. While the region has made considerable strides to lower the amount of pollutants in the air, we still have a way to go to achieve compliance with the current 85ppb standard for ozone and now the federal government is changing the standard to 75ppb, which will substantially increase the challenges we face in achieving compliance.

So what is ozone and why is it so bad? Like cholesterol, some is bad and some is good. In the upper atmosphere, ozone forms a protective shield from the harmful rays of the sun. At ground level, it may be breathed into the lungs and cause severe pain and damage. Ground level ozone forms between May and October when the heat from the sun combines

with volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide. VOCs and NOX are emitted from vehicle tail pipes, compressors, cleaning solvents, manufacturing plants and even some vegetation.

There are many examples of good work occurring in North Texas to clean up the air. The North Central Texas Council of Governments, for example is administering the Air Check Texas program, which provides monetary incentives to remove older high-polluting vehicles from the road. It also developed the Diesel Freight Vehicle Idling Reduction Program and a model ordinance adopted by many of the cities that reduces emissions from unnecessary idling of diesel engines in large trucks. The North Texas Clean Air Coalition also carries out a strong program to encourage businesses to reduce travel demand through



telecommuting, ridesharing, subsidizing transit passes and other measures.

These are steps in the right direction, but they are just the beginning. Currently, the EPA is reviewing the State Implementation Plan that outlines how we will lower emissions. Approval for the Plan is expected to come by the end of 2008. If the EPA does not approve the State Implementation Plan and if the State of

Texas is unable to produce an appropriate plan within two years, the region could face sanctions that would deter business expansion and relocations and curtail highway funding.

The 81st Texas Legislature convenes January 13 and will consider fine tuning programs and enacting new ones to help clean Texas' air. The EPA estimates that reducing the concentration of ozone in the air from

85ppb to 75ppb will have substantial health benefits. They say it will prevent by 2020:

- 380 cases of chronic bronchitis
- 890 fatal heart attacks
- 1,000 cases of acute bronchitis
- 1,900 hospital and emergency room visits
- 6,100 cases of aggravated asthma
- 11,600 cases of upper/lower respiratory symptoms
- 243,000 days of missed work or school
- 750,000 days of restricted activity

Facing these facts, it's easy to understand the health and business benefits to clean North Texas air.

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