

Reservoir site named

THE RECOMMENDATION
Engineers determine that Site Two is best for project

A LONG ROAD
Development of a reservoir here still many years away

A BIG CROWD
At least 100 parish residents turned out to hear report

Engineers say Site Two is most Viable for reservoir

BY ELEANOR EVANS
THE DAILY NEWS

BOGALUSA - The Washington Economic Development Foundation building was standing room only at 3:45 p.m. yesterday, filled with parish residents wondering if their homes would be inundated by a reservoir.

By the end of the meeting, residents in the Oak Grove community were still left wondering, as Site 2 was selected by the Washington Parish Reservoir Commission as the most viable site to construct a reservoir.

Commission Chairman Huey Pierce offered remarks to the audience prior to the meeting.

"The legal charge to this Commission is to develop the wealth and natural resources of the district by conserving soil and water for agricultural, recreational, commercial, industrial and sanitary purposes," Pierce said.

Pierce also explained why the public was not allowed to speak at the meeting. "We are now at that economic feasibility juncture of determining and recommending that single site which will be processed and presented to the U.S. Corps of Engineers for permitting," Pierce said. "The U.S. Corps of Engineers

has the legal jurisdiction for receiving public comments relative to the permitting process."

Pierce urged residents they would be treated "fair and square" by the commission, and "in a timely and orderly manner."

The commission heard from engineer Terry Denmon of Denmon Engineering, who offered a point-by-point presentation of surveys conducted on all three sites.

"We use a standardized procedure to evaluate projects of this nature," Denmon said.

Factors determined in consideration of site selection included hydrologic and hydraulic information, environmental impact, reservoir location, cost of construction and impact on local businesses, residents and the community in general.

Hydrologic and Hydraulic information was provided by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the United States Geological Survey.

According to government data, aquifers in Louisiana "are declining by at least one foot per year," Denmon said.

An example included the Sparta aquifer,

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RESERVOIR: Site Two most viable

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determined "the most critical in the state," which depleted and became one of the reasons for construction of the Poverty Point reservoir in Delhi. "We waited too late to start in North Central Louisiana," Denmon said.

Denmon estimated Washington Parish's water needs at 40 to 44 million gallons per day in estimates for parish growth.

Currently, the parish acquires 70 percent of its water by groundwater from the Southern Hills Aquifer system, which is dropping at a rate of one foot annually.

The firm also studied worst-case scenarios for each site, assuming the maximum probable flood possible by computer monitoring. In the studies, the firm discovered reasonable amounts in all three sites at which levels could rise above flood stage.

The firm determined that current water supply would not be sufficient to meet the needs of Washington Parish residents, and that the area was suited for a reservoir to supply surface water to the area.

Environmental consultant Tom Borland provided environmental studies on rare, endangered and federally protected species in all three sites.

A number of plants and animals were found in all sites, but were "not legally protected," Borland said.

In conducting additional environmental studies, Borland found that the Pushepatappa Creek, also known as Site 3, was determined as a scenic stream, prohibited from impoundment by federal law.

Bill Athens of Christopher Goodwin and Associates appeared before the commission to discuss cultural resources in all

COMMISSION CHAIRMAN — Bogalusan Huey Pierce, who serves as chairman of the reservoir commission, is pictured here during last night's meeting.

three sites that would be affected by the reservoir.

Athens discovered no properties in the National Register of Properties, and nine archaeological sites throughout the parish, but none that had undergone archaeological study.

"We can't determine that one site is better than the other," Athens said.

Denmon then listed all three sites' impact on infrastructure in the area, as well as cost of all sites.

In Site 1, surrounding Lawrence Creek, 18 houses and nine mobile homes would have been affected, as well as Aces Creek Church and Cemetery, a major state highway and some gravel roads. Estimated cost would be \$22 million.

At Site 2, surrounding the Bogue Lusa Creek, nine houses and eight mobile homes would be affected, as well as two cemeteries in the area. Estimated cost would be approximately \$29 million.

At Site 3, surrounding the Pushepatappa Creek, nine homes and five mobile

homes would have been effected, in addition to two churches, two cemeteries and four "significant bridges," Denmon said. The area "set itself apart" from the other two sites at an estimated \$49 million in cost to construct a reservoir.

The firm then offered a scoring system for all sites, the lowest score being placed as the best score, of which Site 2 was deemed the best site with 259.07, followed by Site 1 with 261.85 and trailed by Site 3 with 325.44.

Denmon then officially recommended Site 2 to the commission, which unanimously voted to accept.

The findings will be submitted to the Corps of Engineers, who will accept public input and conduct further studies to determine if the site is indeed viable.

No timeline for the further project research by the Corps of Engineers has been discussed, but complete development of a similar-sized project in Delhi took nearly 20 years.

What's the next step for Site Two property owners

Land owners in the area still to be identified, notified

BY ELEANOR EVANS
THE DAILY NEWS

BOGALUSA – The waiting is over, and one site has been selected as a potential location for a reservoir in the parish.

Washington Parish Reservoir Commission Chairman Huey Pierce explained the upcoming procedure to an eager audience

at last night's meeting of the commission.

Pierce noted that "those directly affected property owners" would now be factually determined by name, location and degree. "State laws are very clear on such processes, and the determination of property values and the determination of property values once a permit is issued."

Pierce urged the audience to avoid rumors and keep the facts in mind in the upcoming process. "Please guard against being a victim of speculation and outright deceit," Pierce said. "We

especially urge you to require proper identification from anyone presenting themselves as a representative of this Commission, of the State of Louisiana or of the U.S. Corps of Engineers," he said.

Once identified, affected property owners with questions or concerns should contact reservoir consultant Mike Thompson, preferably by e-mail at mltgov@emaxcess.com, or by phone at (318) 878-4400, Pierce said.

Denmon Engineering has determined that nine houses, eight mobile homes and two

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NEXT STEP: *a long process*

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cemeteries would be affected by the construction of the reservoir.

The Corps of Engineers must now evaluate all studies conducted by Denmon Engineering to determine if it is a viable site.

"While all three of these sites may actually be permissible by the U.S.

Corps of Engineers, it is prudent, feasible and sound to recommend and pursue only one site for actual permitting and construction at present," Pierce said.

Pierce noted that the Corps would accept public input regarding permitting for the selected site.