



# FOR THE LOVE OF WATER



As Lubbock's population increases, so does its need for fresh water. Lubbock's growth, the impact of drought, and a decreasing amount of water have forced the city to use Lake Alan Henry to supplement diminishing water resources.

According to the City of Lubbock Website, in order to acquire a future water source for Lubbock, the city, in cooperation with the Brazos River Authority, built the John T. Montford Dam, located in Garza County. Holding over 6 billion gallons of water, this resource will soon contribute nearly 30 percent to Lubbock's water.

In order to meet Lubbock's fresh water needs, the city agreed to build a pipeline to carry water from Lake Alan Henry to Lubbock. According to Parkhill Smith & Cooper, engineering firm, the Lake Alan Henry Water Supply Project includes three main components: raw water delivery, water treatment, and treated water delivery. The

raw water delivery system includes three pump stations and 50 miles of 42/48 inch diameter pipe. This is the largest infrastructure project the city of Lubbock has ever undertaken.

John Kelly, associate engineer at Parkhill Smith & Cooper said, "We were able to coordinate instillation of the pipeline prior to the construction of some of the large paving projects on the south side of town."

According to the city of Lubbock's website, the city plans to cover the cost of the project by financing the project for an estimated 20 years and increase water rates by 16%. Also, the city states it has been working to reduce the project's cost through federal and state grant and loan programs. Lake Alan Henry was not originally thought to be needed for another 50 years.

According to Kelly, due to Lake Meredith's continued decline in water availability, development of Lake Alan



Henry as a water supply source began at an accelerated rate. The preliminary design began in 2006 by the engineering teams of Parkhill, Smith & Cooper, Inc., Freese and Nichols, Inc., and Black & Veatch Corporation. Completion of the project, originally estimated at \$250 million, is scheduled for 2012.

Many people are upset about the project. Steve Matthews, Lubbock resident and 10-year homeowner at Lake Alan Henry, is frustrated that Lubbock has started the pipeline project so quickly. When he purchased his lakeside property, the city was not expected to use the lake as a fresh water resource for another 40 to 50 years.

"I have seen firsthand what happened to Lake Meredith, which was much larger than Lake Alan Henry, when Lubbock started pumping water from it. It will be hard to watch the water levels drop so quickly," Matthews said.

Many people who live in Lubbock, like Matthews, have their own water wells and do not rely on the city for their water needs. Those residents feel cheated because they are going to have pay for the project and do not use city water.

According to the Lubbock Avalanche Journal, at the start of 2011, the Canadian River Municipal Water Authority had to shut off pumping from Lake Meredith. This is an effort to try to slow the lake's steady drain. Years of drought and pumping has drained the reservoir to its lowest levels in history. Lake Meredith's water levels have continued to drain to 40 feet, down from 64 feet five years ago and 87 feet at the beginning of the decade. On January 14, 2010, the Lubbock Avalanche Journal reported that since Lake Meredith started to supply most of Lubbock's drinking water, cities surrounding the lake have scrambled to replace the fading water supply. Those cities have invested in groundwater reserves in the Texas Panhandle. Surrounding cities have also had to dig more wells to deliver their drinking water. Still, cities like Lubbock have drawn more water from the lake than originally planned, thus water levels have reduced drastically.

Regardless of the fact that homeowners, like Steve Matthews, do not want to see the lake they love be pumped

dry, it is currently the cheapest alternative to supply Lubbock with the water it needs. Without Lake Alan Henry as a fresh water resource, the city of Lubbock could face some sudden drastic changes.

Randy Green of Lubbock said, "I enjoy visiting Lake Alan Henry and being able to use the lake for recreation, but I enjoy having running water in my house more."

Even though Lubbock's need for water is more important than its need for recreation, Matt Green of


Lubbock would like to see the city explore other options.

"There is a fine line between having water for daily use and having fun, personally I would like to see Lubbock explore other alternatives." Matt

Green said.

The next most practical alternative is to further develop groundwater supplies by expanding well fields located north of Roberts County. With the Lake Alan Henry Water Supply Project estimated at less than half of this alternative, it would seem unreasonable not to build the pipeline.

"Me and my family have made more memories here than anywhere else," Steve Matthews said. It's going to be hard to see it all literally go down the drain. People in Lubbock allow hundreds of gallons of water drain down the street when watering their lawns. It would be nice to see more conservation before we further plunder our water resources at Lake Alan Henry."

Even though people in Lubbock have different attitudes towards the Lake Alan Henry Water Supply Project, the lake will be used for its original intention of supplying Lubbock with the water it requires. Only time will tell if the Lake Alan Henry water supply project will be able to supply the water Lubbock needs in the future. 

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Tanner Ray Green | Lubbock, Texas

