

Flower Mound News

Hearings Begin on Lake Ralph Hall in Austin

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[Courtesy Photo] Future Lake Ralph Hall site.

A hearing began today in Austin on a pending permit application to approve Lake Ralph Hall, a new water supply lake that would be Texas' first in more than 20 years.

Lake Ralph Hall is an Upper Trinity Regional Water District (UTRWD) project intended to help avoid a future water supply crisis in the North Texas regions. Upper Trinity serves more than 25 communities in the DentonCounty area. The State of Texas has confirmed in its Texas Water Plan the need for Lake Ralph Hall, and the water it will provide to UTRWD's customers.

The first of several witnesses are scheduled to testify today before administrative law judges for the State Office of Administrative Hearings. The law judges will hear all sides and make a recommendation to the TCEQ on the merits of the project based on evidence submitted during the hearing.

Tom Taylor, UTRWD's Executive Director, is expected to testify that Lake Ralph Hall is critical to meeting the region's water needs as documented in the Texas Water Plan. During the hearing, Upper Trinity will also present the testimony of several other expert witnesses in support of its application.

A final decision on the Lake Ralph Hall permit will be made by TCEQ to develop Lake Ralph Hall after receipt of the recommendation by the State Office of Administrative Hearings.

The hearing is anticipated to take about two weeks. The Town of Flower Mound is expected to present testimony opposing the project. Flower Mound is the only one of the water district's 25 member cities in Denton and CollinCounties to contest the permit.

"Since the Town of Flower Mound is the largest subscriber to UTRWD, many of the smaller municipalities and districts have allowed Flower Mound to carry the water and be the most vocal challenger to Lake Ralph Hall," said Flower Mound Mayor Tom Hayden. "Make no mistake; Lake Ralph Hall has the potential to cripple every member of the Upper Trinity Regional Water District if unchecked."

"The proposed Lake Ralph Hall is the right size, can be completed in time to protect against a potential water supply crisis and is the lowest-cost source of new water supply available for Upper Trinity customers," Taylor said.

Further, Taylor said "The site of the proposed lake is unique, with no cemeteries, oil or gas wells or pipelines, or transmission lines, and it will make a positive environmental contribution to the area by restoring wetlands and mitigating a long-term soil erosion problem. The lake has strong local support in DentonCounty where most of the customers live who will use the water -- and in FanninCounty where the lake will be built."

Mayor Hayden says that the Upper Trinity is a long, long way from being at its peak capacity and he is confused as to why, at the Town of Flower Mound's request, UTRWD wouldn't want to ensure a more economical source isn't available before issuing a mountain of debt on the backs of their customers.

About UTRWD: Upper Trinity is a regional water district created by the Texas Legislature in 1989 for the benefit of cities and utilities in the Denton County area. Its mandate is to develop regional plans for water supply, and to provide both water and wastewater services on a wholesale basis to cities and utilities within its service area, including all of DentonCounty and portions of Dallas and CollinCounties.

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