

North Texas e-News

Visiting the site of proposed Lake Ralph Hall: part 1

By Allen Rich
Oct 18, 2012

Ladonia, Texas -- Proponents of Lake Ralph Hall feel the proposed 7,605-acre lake on the North Sulphur River near Ladonia has the potential to profoundly impact southeast Fannin County on a scale that hasn't been seen since the Rural Electrification Act brought running water into the homes of rural Texas. Upper Trinity Regional Water District (UTRWD) believes this lake will be needed in the years ahead to keep water running into the homes of a burgeoning population in Denton and Collin counties, as well as meet future water needs of the Sulphur River Basin in Fannin County.

In order to keep the public informed of the timetable associated with Lake Ralph Hall project, one of two lakes currently in the permit process for Fannin County, UTRWD provided local media outlets an opportunity to visit the site of the proposed Lake Ralph Hall in order to document erosion on an epic scale that has occurred since a 16-foot wide, 10-foot deep channel was dug in 1928-29 along side a small meandering stream in order to alleviate occasional flooding of the cotton fields that bordered the often-dry riverbed.

While the project was originally declared a success -- this became one of the only rivers in the U.S. that never leaves its banks -- two important facts were overlooked. First, although a flood could devastate a crop, it also brought silt and nutrients to naturally replenish the soil. Secondly, thousands of acres were destined to disappear as that 16x10 channel eroded into what is now a 300-foot wide, 60-foot deep channel that is twice as wide as the Panama Canal.



Looking up the river channel from the Hwy. 34 bridge.

Tom Taylor, Executive Director of UTRWD feels this is a unique opportunity to create a future water source for North Texans, greatly mitigate erosion and create new wetlands.

North Texas e-News

"We're turning lemons into lemonade," Taylor says of turning the massive eroded channel into a holding tank to supply water for North Texans.



Tom Taylor, Executive Director of Upper Trinity Regional Water District, gives local media a tour of the proposed site for Lake Ralph Hall.

Coming in part 2 -- Target online date for Lake Ralph Hall and a look at the original streambed of North Sulphur River

Visiting the site of proposed Lake Ralph Hall: part 2

By Allen Rich
Oct 19, 2012

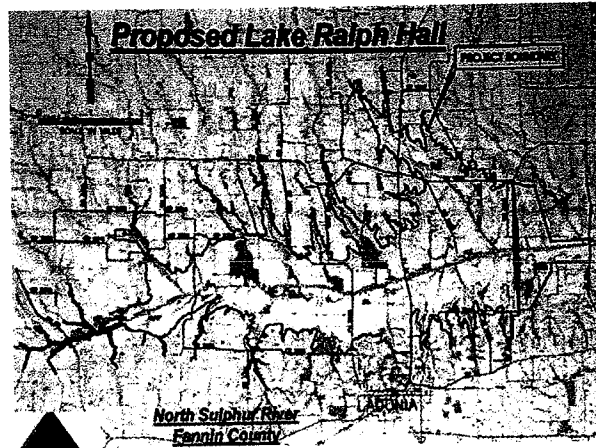
Ladonia, Texas -- The first question most people ask in regard to the two lakes proposed for Fannin County is "when?"

At a media conference held October 17 in Ladonia regarding the proposed Lake Ralph Hall, representatives of Upper Trinity Regional Water District (UTRWD) said the target date to have this future water source online is 2025. Considering that construction of Leon Hurse Dam would take 2-3 years and that most new lakes would require another 2-3 years to fill up, work at the lake could begin somewhere between 2019 and 2021 in order to hit that target date.

This isn't an exact science, however, or there wouldn't be heavy equipment sitting at the bottom of Lake Ray Hubbard. Workers were finishing up in that lake bottom when extremely heavy rains inundated the area and the lake began filling up far ahead of schedule. Previous estimates indicated it would take as long as five years for the lake to fill up; it was full in one year.

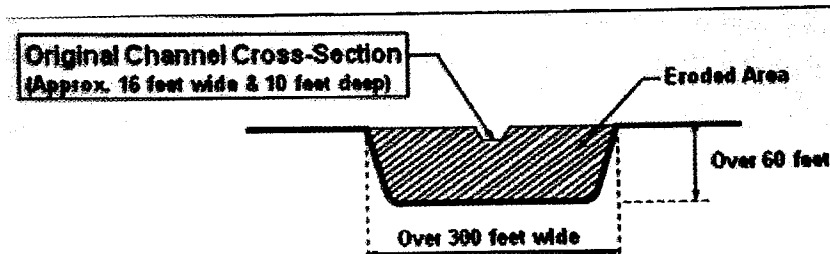
Several variables play havoc with a reliable timetable. A series of dry years which threaten existing water supplies would speed the process to a slight degree. If the population growth of Denton County and Collin County in the next decade exceeds expectations, increased demand for water could also affect the timetable. Realistically, Lake Ralph Hall will be online sometime between 2023 and 2030.

North Texas e-News



Another aspect that is unique to the proposed site of Lake Ralph Hall is that this lake could turn an area that is witnessing erosion on a grand scale into one of the deepest lakes in North Texas. The 300-foot wide, 60-foot deep channel could actually benefit a lake by resulting in increased water storage coupled with less evaporative loss.

The channel is eroding so uniformly that it almost looks as though it was cut to its current dimensions, not the relatively miniscule 16-foot wide, 10-foot deep channel that was excavated in 1928-29.



Current Channel Cross-Section

Comparison of the original channel dwarfed by the current channel
"It's smoother than Central Expressway in places," remarks Tom Taylor, Executive Director of UTRWD, tongue in cheek.

North Texas e-News

"We started way back in the early '90s," says Mr. Hurse, recalling some of the first tumultuous meetings regarding a proposed lake on North Sulphur River. In honor of his years of faithful support, the dam on Lake Ralph Hall has been officially proclaimed Leon Hurse Dam.

"It started out as 'damn Leon Hurse' and ended up as Leon Hurse Dam," quips the good-natured former mayor.



Former Ladonia Mayor Doug Franklin points to where the north end of Leon Hurse Dam will be located just off County Road 1550.