



## LAKE TRAVIS

# BULLETIN

## THE PROTECT LAKE TRAVIS ASSOCIATION

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LATE SPRING 1987

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### UPSTREAM POLLUTION RULES

The final hearing by the Texas Water Commission on the rules for Lakes LBJ and Marble Falls before 2 of the 3 commissioners took place on May 5. Tommy Mason, head of water quality at the commission, testified that the staff was in favor of the rules as proposed. Our testimony was a summary from the February 9 hearing along with some new information that clearly stated that we were against any new or old permits for effluent discharges into these lakes. Thus the staff approved of grandfathering the permits held by LBJ MUD, Kingsland MUD, and City of Marble Falls; we were against this. Our summarized testimony follows:

I. Statement of our accomplishments in and around shores of Lake Travis. to protect water quality.

#### II. Lake LBJ and Marble Falls Facts

1. Lakes Marble Falls and LBJ have the worst trophic rating of all seven Highland Lakes; Lake Travis is second best in the state; Lake Marble Falls is 34th and Lake LBJ is 36th, thus 35% of the lakes in Texas are in better condition. The clarity, chlorophyll, and phosphorus levels in these two lakes are about 2.5 times worse than Lake Travis. (This information from Texas Water Commission's "Water Quality Inventory"-November 1986).
2. Adding an effluent with nutrients to an already existing dirty lake is not going to help.
3. Pictures of Lake Marble Falls reveal considerable foam, a prohibited permit condition.
4. Lake LBJ is not being contaminated by: (1) Inks Lake (upstream from Lake LBJ) because the Water Quality Inventory states that trophic rating is #26 which is obviously better than Lake LBJ's #36, and (2) the Llano because "Water for Texas-Technical Appendix-Volume 2-November 1984-TDWR" states "The Highland Lakes receive inflow from the main stem (Colorado River) and the Llano River, a tributary. The quality of tributary inflows is excellent".
5. The only reason these 2 Lakes are not in worse condition is because detention time is relatively short. Lake Marble Falls is only 7 days maximum.

III. Lake Travis deterioration is not evident

1. Because it is so big (200' deep and over a mile wide in places) the cesspool effect is helping out-the filth tends to settle out.
2. The upper end of Lake Travis shows the actual pollution-it has bad odors, low clarity, and a lot of algae as reported by residents along this area.
3. The lower end appears clean, but clarity at diving depths has decreased from 70' to 25' in 10 years (pictures were shown of water on upper end-a dirty greenish brown, and lower end-a light blue).

IV. Land is supposedly not available for disposal of effluent

1. Over 1900 acres are suitable according to our irrigation expert in the Marble Falls area within 2½ miles of the sewage plant (one man has offered his land at no charge).
2. The owner of a golf course would accept the effluent from Kingsland MUD.
3. There are 3 golf courses and much green belt to accept effluent from the 2 LBJ MUD's.

V. The cost to operate a sewage plant with land disposal of effluent has been greatly exaggerated.

1. It certainly is easier and cheaper to produce an effluent for irrigation that obviously has a rather low quality than it is to produce a high quality effluent that is discharged into a lake.
2. Our expert on sewage plant costs showed that a Marble Falls monthly sewer bill would be \$13.65 as opposed to the \$161 per month as quoted by the Marble Falls city manager.

VI. We find it unfair to even remotely consider any grandfathering of existing sewage plants on these 2 Lakes since the permitted daily discharge is 2.8 million gallons per day as compared to the actual daily discharge of only 6,800 gallons per day on all of the other 5 Lakes.

VII. The recreational usage of these Lakes is at stake due to viral pollution.

1. Viruses do survive a sewage plant.
2. For the proposed Marble Falls plant, 490 million virus per day will pass into Lake Marble Falls.
3. Virus survive for weeks.
4. Virus can travel for miles.
5. They cause diseases such as meningitis, paralysis, myocarditis, acute gastroenteritis, hepatitis, and respiratory syndromes.
6. The only effective way to remove virus from effluent for lake disposal is with reverse osmosis. Because of the cost of operation etc. this process is prohibitive for all but the affluent communities.
7. Detection of virus is difficult and expensive. There is no correlation between fecal coliform counts and virus levels. The commission checks only fecal coliform counts.

VIII. It is frightening to us:

1. That the Marble Falls application as written will allow discharges at much higher levels with no nutrient removals and long before the 1.5 million gallon per day plant is built.
2. That only nitrogen as ammonia is to be removed. Removal of ammonia will help protect fish life but allow flow through of nitrogen as nitrates and thus cause a proliferation of plant growth.
3. That there are many people served along Lakes LBJ, Marble Falls, and Travis by small and relatively inefficient but approved drinking water plants that may produce contaminated drinking water due to presence of viruses and any number of the 145 compounds listed in the EPA "Gold Book". There are 22,045 people served from 18 drinking water plants.
4. That Marble Falls had a bad hepatitis outbreak caused by their sewage plant in 1980.
5. That with a sewage plant as proposed by Marble Falls that restricts phosphorus levels to 1 part per million will produce 3 tons of algae daily.

IX. The fear, that if effluent is not returned to the Lakes, the Lakes will dry up bears some specific facts:

1. If the Marble Falls proposed plant at 1.5 million gallons per day did not discharge for a full year, Lake Travis would be lowered only 10.5".
2. Lake Marble Falls has a dependable water supply of 641 acre feet per year; with non replacement of the total annual effluent as stated above, the loss would be only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1%.
3. The average flow through Lake Travis is 535 million gallons per day. Even if all of the permitted upstream discharges were stopped, this would be only  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1%.

X. Fringe benefits of land use of effluent

1. Irrigation works but it takes a selling job to prove its merits. Many farmers, land owners, local citizens in any area are not aware of the financial advantages because they have not seen local examples.

2. Zoysia grass could thrive in such projects in central Texas. One acre can produce each year 5,000 yards valued at \$4 per yard. That is \$20,000 gross revenue per acre per year.

XI. Bottled samples of lake water from LBJ, Marble Falls, and Travis were presented for the commissioners to view. The plant growth was quite evident in all samples except that from Travis.

(NOTE: The technical data and information in the above eleven topics was furnished by our executive committee's research, help from our lawyer's staff, help from experts in our membership, and help from our professional consultants (Mel Hinson, Dr. Ted Metcalf, Dr. Bobby Carlile, Don Rauschuber, P.E.). Please note that these consultants and our lawyer are the only ones receiving pay for their services).

HELP!!!

The preparation for and the costs of the February 9, February 24, and May 5 hearings have cost us over \$15,000. It was decided that if we did not win the rules hearing, a law suit would be filed in State District Court against the Texas Water Commission for its undocumented staff recommendation to allow "grandfathering" on Lakes Marble Falls and LBJ. In addition to this expense, we have the costs of other hearings: May 28-LBJ MUD Slick Rock, LBJ MUD West; June 9-Kingsland MUD, and June 15-Marble Falls.

Your past contributions are appreciated. We need your help in getting more. "Reach out and touch" some new prospects, use the attached form so that we can place everyone on our mailing list.

Recently we received \$1,000 contributions from Lake Travis Improvement Association, Randall Budd, and Austin Yacht Club. Our executive committee and all members want to express their special thanks for these super donations.

NOMINATIONS

It is time for nominations for our 6 person executive committee. The current committee (John Strickland, Sam Warrington, Taylor Ollmann, Susan Young, and Cecil Laws) have agreed to be candidates.

Ann McCandless, our effective and hard working vice president, resigned recently because she can not find enough hours in a day to meet her personal and business goals.

Please forward nominations to PLTA, Box 5929, Austin 78763 by JUNE 5 giving the following information: 1. Name, 2. Address, 3. Phone, 4. three line biographical sketch, and 4. Signature along with statement, "If elected, I will agree to pursue aggressively solutions to water quality problems on the Highland Lakes".