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Our History



Misperceptions, rumors circulate around Lake Columbia

ANRA explains facts, dispels fiction regarding proposed reservoir
BY TERRIE GONZALEZ

As Lake Columbia shifts from concept to reality, rumors abound about

the reservoir and how it will impact property owners who live in the footprint or just outside the boundary line.

Just last month, the Angelina Neches River Authority fielded a call from a man who was concerned about right-of-way.

"The man heard that ANRA was going to construct a road that circles the lake," said Kelley Holcomb, ANRA general manager. "He said he heard that ANRA was going to sell the property between the road and the reservoir for lake front homes" and essentially keep the profit.

Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Holcomb assured him.

He said he has heard two other rumors, however, which are equally off base.

One rumor cycling through the grapevine is that ANRA is going to condemn the property and not compensate the landowners.

Another tale without merit is that property owners can ask whatever price they want for their land, and ANRA will have to pay it.

False, false and false. Mr. Holcomb said that once the construction permit is awarded, ANRA will begin acquiring land for the new reservoir.

Property owners will be fairly compensated, assured Mr. Holcomb. He said that land purchases will be based on fair market value and recent comparable land transactions.

Once the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issues the 404 construction permit, ANRA will give the participants who have purchased water rights on the project an opportunity to amend their percentages.

Some smaller water groups may opt out of the project altogether; others may increase their financial participation and percentage of water rights.

Mr. Holcomb said that this process will likely take six months.

"A top priority will be to secure the first parcels of land where the dam site will be constructed," he said.

From the date that the 404 construction permit is issued, Lake Columbia should be finished within five years.

Andy Fannette, who owns Century 21 in Jacksonville, has bought and sold a lot of land in the Lake Columbia area during the last five to seven years.

Prices have ranged from a low of \$2,000/acre to a high of \$5,000/acre, depending on the location.

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Meeka Elaine Mitchem
Meeka was born December 08, 2009 at 4:12 pm. She weighed 6 lbs 12 oz and was 19 inches long.
She is welcomed by her loving parents, Corey and Amber Mitchem of Jacksonville, Texas (grandparents: Shirley and Walter Cook and Carl Cook of Rock Creek, Texas) and Cheryl and Charles Mitchem of Okmulgee, Texas (grandparents: Stan and Sue Nelson of Jacksonville, Texas; Gary Cook of Jacksonville, Texas and Larry and Celia Cook of Jacksonville, Texas; great-grandparents: Roger Hays of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Nancy, Charles, and Fredrick).

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"I really think it's a possibility that Lake Columbia will be built," he said. "Now is a great time to get it started. They can buy cheap bonds right now."

Mr. Fannette said the sluggish economy has slowed sales but not depressed land prices in the area.

"There's a lot of red tape to get the construction permit," he said.

"But once they (ANRA) get the permit, I think we'll see a lake in just a few years."

FAST FACTS ON LAKE COLUMBIA

The primary purpose of Lake Columbia is water supply. Lake Columbia is not a flood control reservoir, nor is it envisioned to have hydroelectric capabilities.

The lake will be located in the Mud Creek floodplain, approximately 10 miles northeast of Jacksonville, primarily in Cherokee County, with the northern limits of the lake extending into Smith County.

It will be 14 miles in length, 1.5 miles wide; cover 10,000 acres; contain 187,839 acre feet of water; and provide 85,507 acre feet of water per year to water supply customers.

Environmental impact studies are complete and have been approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The public comment period begins today.

Officials say the lake could begin construction during 2010.

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