

Editorial: City's key concessions on Bullhide Creek Waco Tribune-Herald

Sunday, October 05, 2008

It is self-evident: With growth comes the need for more sewage treatment.

In this corner, we often rail against duplication of services and turf battles in what from a bird's eye is one community: Greater Waco.

Toward meeting the area's sewage treatment needs, the Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewer System has done its work in the best way possible.

In refining its proposal for a plant along Bull Hide Creek between Lorena and Hewitt, it also addresses environmental concerns in the best way possible.

WMARRS has been attentive to concerns about a particularly popular stretch of creek that many residents don't want spoiled.

Rather than taking the shortest route from the proposed plant site to the creek as is standard practice, plans call for routing discharges many yards away where they would intersect with a less distinct stretch of Bull Hide. Regardless, the treated effluent is not the environmental threat some claim. It can be cleaner than runoff-rich water from upstream.

Opponents say they worry about sludge spoiling the environment. Yet, sludge from the plant will be trucked away. By and large, the rest of the concerns are those that accompany development already seen in rural McLennan County — lights, traffic. Of course, rural development is the very reason why a new sewage plant is needed. Speaking of the environment: Over 1,400 (*correction, over 11,000*) septic systems are operating in the county. They pose a cumulative hazard from overflow and malfunction.

Then there are the needs of metropolitan communities. WMARRS serves Waco, Robinson, Lorena, Hewitt, Bellmead, Lacy Lakeview and Woodway.

Of the cities in desperate need of this plant, Lorena is at the front of the line. It has a moratorium on building because of its overtaxed sewage treatment plant. Were it to build a replacement instead of teaming up with other cities at Bull Hide Creek, the cost would be prohibitive.

The location of the proposed plant is not a matter of whimsy or callousness by big-city folks. It is where it is because of growth patterns. It's there to ease the burdens on lift stations that now must work against gravity to move sewage to the Waco city treatment plant.

At some point density will dictate that more people in rural Greater Waco will need sewer service. This plant would get ahead of that.

WMARRS has an obligation to deal simultaneously with Greater Waco's development and its environmental needs. Its plans for Bull Hide Creek do both.