

The City of Wichita Falls is compelled to set the record straight on Lake Ringgold following a series of recent public statements coming out of a permitting process that is far from over. Such statements have been made by people who have not been intimately involved in the process of securing our future water supply. Lake Ringgold is an essential water supply project for our City, our region, and the people and businesses located here, and the City will ensure that every effort is made for its permitting and ultimate construction. We owe that to everyone who lived through the terrible drought of a decade ago, and we owe it to the future generations of Wichita Falls residents who will depend upon the decisions we make today for our water future.

Less than ten years ago, the City and its residents were faced with an extreme drought that almost depleted the City's water supply and had a dramatic impact on businesses. Sheppard Air Force Base was making plans to move missions. Lake levels reached unprecedented low levels (20%), and the City had to ask its residents to take extreme measures to conserve water through a drought that spanned years. It even led to a population impact, which naturally coincided with economic losses for the region that exceeded \$1 billion, as has been documented. Scraping by is a scenario that the City does not want to repeat, and the comments and news articles over the last few weeks seem to forget the drought reality the City continues to face mandating that we find water supplies that will protect the region when confronted by a similar drought situation in the future.

Several statements merit particular attention. First of all, when some say Wichita Falls should consider alternatives to Lake Ringgold, we already have. More than 20 alternatives were examined for viability, including looking at reliable quantities of water, location, and cost. The alternatives considered by the City included additional groundwater supplies, import of other surface water sources, additional conservation, among others (the City also considered other initial ideas that were initially vetted and deemed infeasible to meet the City's and its customers' water needs). Lake Ringgold is the only option to meet the needs of the City now and into the future. That's not just a City statement; it's one that the state agency charged with the state's water planning

efforts, the Texas Water Development Board (“TWDB”) has approved over and over again by recommending Lake Ringgold in its five-year state and regional plans for water supply planning.

Secondly, the notion that Lake Ringgold is somehow “too big” or would impound more water than the City needs is simply not true. Lake Ringgold is designed and would be permitted to impound water during the worst drought experiences and would also be able to capture flows that spill from Lakes Kickapoo and Arrowhead, maximizing water available for use in the City’s reservoir system. If Lake Ringgold had been available during the last drought, it would have dramatically reduced the overall economic impact to the City and North Texas Region, caused by the fear of running out of water, which was very real not even a decade ago.

Third, the City and the TWDB are not alone in their support for the development of Lake Ringgold. The Texas Legislature has designated Lake Ringgold as a unique reservoir site on multiple occasions, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (“TCEQ”) Executive Director staff and the Office of Public Interest Counsel recommended issuance of the Lake Ringgold permit. In 2007, the Texas Legislature authorized the designation of sites of unique value for the construction of a reservoir in the State Water Plan, and the 2007 State Water Plan recommended Lake Ringgold as a major reservoir site. In 2015, State Representative Frank and then-State Representative Springer authored, and Senator Estes sponsored, House Bill (“HB”) 1042, which designated Lake Ringgold again as a site with unique value for the construction of a reservoir. HB 1042 was passed by the Texas Legislature with no opposition or testimony against the legislation. While a handful of landowners with property within the reservoir footprint may oppose the permit, over 100,000 residents of the City and future generations of the entire North Texas Region are relying on the water supply that Lake Ringgold will provide. Furthermore, Lake Ringgold is the last remaining freshwater reservoir site for this entire region—there are no other feasible options, which is reflected in policymakers’ continued decision to prioritize Lake Ringgold.

Much of the anti-Lake Ringgold commentary of recent weeks presumes that a decision has already been made, which is not true. All parties have a chance to weigh in on a draft recommendation which is just that: a recommendation to the three Commissioners of the TCEQ on whether to give the City a state water right permit for

Lake Ringgold. At some point, likely later this spring or early summer, the TCEQ Commissioners will make a decision on the permit application. The TCEQ has a responsibility of determining how the City's application matches up to the state's rules and laws which govern such applications, and until that decision has been made, it's premature to reach the types of conclusions circulating in the media.

The City remains confident in the state water right application process and looks forward to prevailing with a final state permit for Lake Ringgold. We would ask the public to reach out to us if there are questions about Lake Ringgold, particularly as the reservoir project reflects a process that has been thorough and detailed, spanning many years. We have more information readily available online that outlines the need for Lake Ringgold and answers frequently asked questions (such information is available at www.wichitafallstx.gov/2085/Lake-Ringgold). Lake Ringgold will provide water security for the residents of the City of Wichita Falls for generations to come, even during the next drought that most assuredly will occur. I appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight as we work toward a water-secure future for our community and our region. I am currently actively working to bring everyone involved to the table for an in-person meeting so we can possibly move forward on the same page....we all live here, we all love it here, we all need to work together for the benefit of our City and this entire region”