

## **GRAND SALINE CREEK RESIDENTS**

June 25, 2025

North East Texas Regional Water Planning Group (Region D)  
228 Texas Avenue, Suite A  
New Boston, TX 75570

Dear Region D Board Members

It is with great anxiety that we choose to make written comment on the 2026 Region D Initially Prepared Plan (IPP) regarding the proposed Grand Saline Creek Reservoir alternate strategy. The residents of Grand Saline Creek in Van Zandt County successfully lobbied the residents of Canton, Texas and petitioned our Region D representative and this Board against this unwarranted project over 14 years ago.

We believe a little back story along with facts may help this body better understand what is at stake and aid in your decision on removing this strategy from inclusion in the 2026 and any future Region D Plan.

This project originates with a much disputed and debated Comprehensive Plan in 2004 conducted by paid consultants of the City of Canton. This study attempted to make the case that the City of Canton, Texas, would one day experience such exponential growth, that they would run out of water. Since the politicians in Canton, agreed with these much-disputed population projections, in 2008 the city hired Gary Burton Engineering, Inc. (GBEI) to conduct a Long-Term Water Supply Study.

The study focused on a new Reservoir on Mill Creek and the purchase of treated and raw water from the City of Tyler. It also evaluated the purchase of raw water from Lake Palestine from the Upper Neches River Municipal Water Authority. The study says that the City of Tyler has ample water to supply Canton's long-term water needs.

The water study states that Canton will have a 2065 population of 34,268. It further states that Canton can document a population in excess of 5,000 in 2007. Fast-

forward and in 2024 the current population sign based on 2020 U.S. Census data is 4,229. It should be obvious that The City of Canton's 2004 Comprehensive study and arithmetic should not be trusted or relied upon by Region D or any other person or entity.

The City of Canton feels that they will need 7.4 MGD or 8,288 acre-feet per year by 2065. With their existing capacity they say that leaves them at a deficit of 6,468 acre-feet per year or 5.78 MGD. The City of Canton wants a lake but does not need one. In the water study GBEI looks at 5 alternative reservoir sites.

The study evaluated and concluded that the City of Canton could purchase all the treated water they think they will need from the City of Tyler. This seems like a very logical and sensible option. This option would cause less environmental harm be less disruptive to all of Van Zandt Counties citizens and accomplish the goal of providing for Canton's long term water needs, even if many do not agree that Canton's population will grow at the rates in this study.

At the time of the study, City of Canton had the opportunity to purchase up to 25,000 acre-feet of water from the Upper Neches Regional Municipal Water Authority (UNRMWA). If water was that important and vital, why did the City of Canton not apply for the water from Lake Palestine. Even if there was no clear path for getting that water to Canton. Having done so, would have given Canton the ability to negotiate with The City of Tyler, City of Dallas and or Tarrant County in the future.

GBEI recommends the construction of a new reservoir. They of course were paid and tasked by the City of Canton to come to such a conclusion. However, Gary Burton Engineering Inc.'s study recommends a new reservoir be built on Mill Creek but not on Grand Saline Creek.

In 2010 the citizens of Mill Creek began to organize against the new Mill Creek reservoir. This group of individuals include extended family members of a prominent longtime Canton family along with other well-connected families. They attempted to have the City of Canton move the reservoir over to Grand Saline Creek against GBEI's recommendation. In late 2010 the citizens of Grand Saline Creek were not notified, but became aware of the issue. Beginning in February of 2011, and over several months the citizens of Grand Saline Creek lobbied and helped inform our neighbors and friends in Canton. We purchased newspaper ads, and went door to door educating and explaining our case. This effort helped elect three citizens onto the Canton City Council. This caused the defeat of city council woman, Lou Ann Everett along with one other council man and elected a new mayor, Cary Hilliard. This mayor, while related to citizens along Mill Creek, and a cousin to the previous Van Zandt County Region D Board Member Dennis Hilliard, ended the City of Canton's pursuit of

any lake on Mill Creek or Grand Saline Creek. After several years, and a successful unopposed run by Ms. Everett to become Mayor of Canton, Ms. Everett and the new council began to pursue the new reservoir on Grand Saline Creek not Mill Creek as GBEI recommend. This appears like retribution against the citizens of Grand Saline Creek.

We know from past experience that the vast majority of Canton Citizens are not in favor of this project. A small number of individuals with ulterior motives are pushing this issue, and going unchecked. We strongly believe that this proposed reservoir is a ploy designed to help revive First Monday and offer a recreational option for those visiting Canton. You can not use eminent domain to build a recreational lake, so the City of Canton fakes a need for water. According to Region D, there is still no projected water deficit in the planning cycle for the City of Canton.

This proposed reservoir, cannot be justified by any person of reasonably sound judgement. This immoral project threatens the lives and livelihoods of many longtime Van Zandt residents. Many of whom live, work, worship and fellowship with the citizens of Canton. There are major impacts to natural gas lines, as well as, a Wood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) electrical substation and associated transmission lines that would have to be relocated. Grand Saline ISD (GSISD) would also suffer greatly from the loss of their tax base which could not be recouped. The majority of the lake impacts GSISD with a smaller impact to Canton ISD. We strongly disagree, and we are currently calculating current property values. The values Canton submitted to the TCEQ are 4 to 5 years old and should not be trusted. According to their water rights application, rather than allow their consultant to calculate land values, the City of Canton did it. The impacts to agricultural land which will not be replaced and impacts to the environment with the possibility of endangered species. The true costs to Van Zandt County residents are immeasurable.

We do not believe the proposed Grand Saline Creek Reservoir or any reservoir should be constructed in Van Zandt County. However, should a reservoir be built by The City of Canton, they should be forced to follow their own consultant Gary Burton's Long-Term Water Study, and build the new Mill Creek Reservoir. As presented in this letter, and citing the City of Canton's own Long-Term Water Study, other alternatives exist. They have also squandered the opportunity to apply for the 25,000 acre-feet per year of water from Lake Palestine. They still could potentially partner with the City of Tyler for their long-term water needs. We encourage Region D to find alternative solutions for Canton. Please do not let the City of Canton dictate what they want rather than what they need.

We know that Region D fights tirelessly against the City of Dallas's proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir. The disrespect and disregard DFW shows to their fellow Texans, is now shared by The City of Canton's elected officials. These two projects, while greatly different in size, have no basis and are unwarranted. We therefore, respectfully ask that you remove the proposed alternate Grand Saline Creek Reservoir from the 2026 Regional Water Plan and any future plans. We would also ask that the Region D Board petition the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) against issuing the water rights of Grand Saline Creek to the City of Canton.

Respectfully,

Grand Saline Creek Residents & Property Owners

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AGAINST THE PROPOSED GRAND SALINE CREEK RESERVOIR**

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