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Lake benefits far reaching: Construction for Bois d'Arc Lake in line for 2021 completion

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Bois d'Arc Lake Dam and Reservoir Aerial When complete, the dam at Bois d'Arc Lake will be 2-miles-long and 90-feet-tall at its highest point. The brown-colored dirt will be the water-side of the dam. The two conduit pipes that will transport water from the intake tower to the raw water pump station are visible in the lower portion of photo. **Buy I**

Photos courtesy of North Texas Municipal Water District

BONHAM -- Construction is on schedule and under budget for the 2021 completion of the first lake to be built in Texas in the past 30 years.

The immediate and long-term benefits from the construction of Bois d'Arc Lake for Fannin and surrounding counties are staggering as this Northeast Texas county shares its water resources with a growing and thirsty population to the west.

"We had some challenges with the weather, but we've had 60 days of dry weather and we're on schedule and under budget," project manager Steve Long said Thursday of the 16,641 surface-acre lake in northeast Fannin County projected to cost roughly \$1.6 billion.

In addition to the 26-square-mile lake with its two-mile, 90-foot-tall dam, the project includes the building of a 35-mile raw water pipeline to a water treatment plant in Leonard and a 25-mile treated water line to where it connects north of McKinney to the North Texas Municipal Water District regional water system and to the 80 communities it serves.

Long talked about the major areas of work now in progress — the dam and intake structure, road construction, mitigation property, the Leonard treatment plant and the two pipelines. All work is expected to be complete by fall 2021 with water delivery to begin in spring 2022.

"We have 625 workers all together and 200 pieces of machinery running around at the lake construction site," Long said, explaining dam construction is under the supervision of construction manager at risk Archer Western, a member of the Walsh Group, the 13th largest contractor in the United States with vast experience in building dams.

Although North Texas Municipal Water District has experience in building treatment plants, digging holding reservoirs and building cross-county transmission lines, the district, obviously, had little to no experience about building dams.

Construction manager at risk overseas project

"We brought in the construction manager at risk to give us a price to deliver the project and then they bid out all the components," Long said, explaining the water district chose Archer Western because of the labyrinth spillway they constructed on the Brazos River in Waco rather than a gated type spillway. "We could make a shorter spillway and save about \$ 4 million, and it's all about the money."

Austin Bridge and Road, with headquarters in Dallas, is in charge of about 11 miles of road construction and is building a 1.3-mile-long bridge over the lake connecting FM 1396 by way of a new FM 897 to Highway 82. Work is on schedule with most county roads to reopen by the

end of the year, according to boisdarclake.org.

Construction is underway at the Leonard Water Treatment plant with Paris' own HWH Construction Co. digging a holding reservoir and doing other groundwork at the plant, which is expected to be completed in 2021.

Work on the 35-mile raw water pipeline from the lake to Leonard is well underway with delivery of the 90-inch pipe beginning in June. The 84-inch treated water line from Leonard to McKinney has been ordered and fabrication is to begin soon.

"It's one big pipe," Long said of the 90-inch raw water pipe, explaining that every piece is 50-foot long, weighs 30,000 pounds and takes a large tractor-trailer to deliver each piece. "We have 3,600 truck loads of raw water pipe coming in."

Mitigation work on Riverby Farms in Lamar County is well underway with roughly 1.5 million of 5 million trees planted so far, Long said.

"We are replacing the habitat we flood with the reservoir almost acre for acre," Long said, adding that in addition to the 15,000-acre Riverby Ranch property, which the water district purchased in its entirety, the district has roughly 1,900 acres for mitigation south of Bonham. "Work continues to restore streams, plant grassland cover crops, plow and conduct controlled burns and herbicide treatments."

Economic impact far-reaching

The economic impact from lake construction is tremendous, not only in Fannin County but in neighboring counties as well, according to Bonham Chamber of Commerce executive director Dale McQueen.

"All our trailer parks are full of campers, and we've definitely seen a huge increase in worker activity in our stores," McQueen said. "What's most surprising is the number of inquiries we are getting about the availability of lake front property and just property in general. I see this as an economic boost not only during construction but 30 years or more into the future as houses are built and people come here for recreation."

A 2015 outside economic analysis of the lake's benefits projects a sustained \$166 million in economic activity per year in Fannin County. New permanent and weekend residents are expected to contribute more than \$81 million annually in economic activity with 2,400 new jobs created. Demand for waterfront and near waterfront homes expected to support 3,200 homes over a 30-year period.

During construction, the building of lake infrastructure is expected to increase economic activity in Fannin County by at least \$509 million and the construction of the dam, the raw water pipe line and treatment plant is expected to boost economic activity in Fannin, Collin, Delta, Lamar, Grayson and Hunt counties by \$682 million, according to the 2015 report.

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