

Water needs study on tap

By SHANNON DAUGHTRY | Posted: Thursday, December 29, 2011 2:00 am

LAKE JACKSON — The Brazosport Water Authority and Brazoria County are trying to identify all of the county's potential water sources, and officials say a grant from the Texas Water Quality Board would help pay for a regional water planning study.

"We're sitting down at the tail end of the Brazos River and more and more people upstream are pulling water," said Ronnie Woodruff, general manager for the Brazosport Water Authority. "We need to be proactive."

The study would determine the most feasible infrastructure alternative for satisfying the needs of regional water and wastewater treatment.

"It will help us learn about getting water to other entities besides our seven client cities," Board President Juan Longoria said.

The study would include a desalination plant BWA has proposed and would help the board determine what kind of water would be needed for the desalination plant and what size plant would be best.

Applying for the grant does not affect the progress already being made on the master plan study for the desalination plant, he said.

"We're pushing on with our part," Longoria said. "The engineers promised us we'd have some kind of definition of what kind of waters could be used and the cost of the plant."

The Texas Water Development Board's Regional Facility Planning Grant provides 50 percent matching funds to projects involving two or more entities of the state that evaluate regional solutions for water infrastructure.

This grant focuses on infrastructure planning needs, Longoria said.

The grant would be for about \$136,000 and would not be received until August or September, Longoria said. The total project is \$276,000, and the rest of the funds would come from other entities committed to the study.

"The study is broader than just BWA," Longoria said.

The entities included in the study are Brazoria County, Brazosport Water Authority, Brazoria County Groundwater Conservation District, Brazos River Harbor Navigation District, Angleton, Brazoria, Clute, Freeport, Lake Jackson, Oyster Creek, Richwood, Pearland, Manvel, Alvin, Conoco Phillips and Dow Chemical Co., he said. "In both cases, BWA will be the focal point because we have the water plant," Longoria said. "The other entities have asked to be in the

study.”

The regional water planning study would consider cost effective water supplies for municipal and industrial customers, Woodruff said.

“It’s a really interesting study and we’re hoping we get the commitment money,” Longoria said. “If we do get the grant money, then we’ll be able to do a more thorough study, which is only more beneficial for Brazoria County.”

If BWA was not to receive the grant, Longoria said they will still go forward with the \$80,000 master plan study its engineering firm, Camp Dresser & McKee is performing.

“The additional funding would help us to go more in-depth and look at the issues on a broader spectrum,” he said.

Applying for the grant is the first step to address needs and how the county needs to move forward, Longoria said.

The recipients of this grant will not be reported until the end of March.

Brazosport Water Authority officials said the grant writer they have appointed, Susan Roth, believes they have a good chance at funding.

“The state has allocated \$500,000 for grants,” Longoria said.

“Roth has said she thinks three or four entities will be awarded grants.”

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