

WHAT THE WATER SUPPLY PLAN MEANS FOR CITY RESIDENTS

The current \$143,000,000 50-year water supply plan calls for the city to approve the following:

- 1) Give up 4 million gallons per day of clean mountain water from the Moorman's River

The pipeline linking the Moormans River and the Sugar Hollow Reservoir directly to the water system and Ragged Mountain Reservoir will be cut off. This takes away the cleanest water in the area as a direct source of water for city use.

- 2) Give up two of our three city-owned reservoirs

The Sugar Hollow Reservoir (SHR) accounts for 360 million gallons of stored water. It will be cut off as a direct source of water. In times of drought, water may be released into the Moorman's which flows into the Rivanna but in such dry times it is predicted that at least 25% will be lost to re-absorption, possibly much more.

We will lose the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir (SFRR) as well. This plan allows the siltation of the SFRR to continue unabated. The SFRR will lose 75% of its current capacity (90% of its original capacity) within the time frame of the plan. The loss of these two sources of water storage totals more than a billion gallons of stored capacity and is why Ragged Mountain Reservoir will need to rise by 45 vertical feet.

- 3) Give up 180 acres of city-owned park land at the Ragged Mountain Natural Area.

135 acres of the natural area including more than half the walking trails at the park will be flooded and another 35 acres will be cleared for roads, the dam, and other infrastructure associated with the expanded reservoir.

- 4) Flood 135 acres of mature forest – owned by the city - that has been cited for its exceptional wildlife habitat by a Smithsonian study and Albemarle County Biodiversity Committee

The loss of recreational parkland is not the only damage inflicted by the plan. In the summer of 2002, Dr. Matthew Etterson of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center conducted a research project on the effects of forest fragmentation on nesting success of Wood Thrush at several sites in the Piedmont, including Fernbrook, Humpback Rocks, Betsy Bell, Fortune's Cove, Natural Chimneys, Paul State Forest and Ragged Mountain Natural Area. He found that among all these sites, Ragged Mountain Natural Area proved to be not only the most productive, with a total of 64 nests, but also the site of greatest nesting success. Etterson attributed that success to the maturity of the forest and the protective topography of the land.

In the 2006 Albemarle County Biodiversity Report, the Ragged Mountains and Reservoir were cited as significant for unusual habitat that support species scarce in our area such as River Otter, Prothonotary Warbler, and Wood Frog.

- 5) Build 29,000 linear feet of roads at the Ragged Mountain Natural Area

Roads will be required for clear cutting of timber, dam construction, and reinforcement of the I-64 embankment. In addition, two miles of the now rural Reservoir Road will need to be widened and improved for the heavy equipment needed to build the dam.

- 6) The loss of a major recreational resource in the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir

Fishermen, boaters, rowers, and wildlife observers will lose the lake-like quality of the SFRR as it returns to a riverine system due to neglect. Parts of the reservoir are already impassable by boat and the lower reaches of Ivy Creek have reverted to a narrow passage. Authorities rejected plans to maintain the reservoir for water storage through dredging, despite a strong and vocal public sentiment that it was a “valued community resource.”

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WHAT DO CITY RESIDENTS GET FOR ALL THAT?

- 1) The city will have the same amount of water we have now, except of lower quality.

Today, the city uses 4 million gallons of water a day. In fifty years, studies predict that the city will need even LESS water than today. Conversely, Albemarle County will likely triple its water use due to population growth and development. The expansion of the water system is needed only for county growth, yet city residents will be expected to help pay for it.

WATER QUALITY: Today, the city draws water from both the Moormans/Sugar Hollow system and the Rivanna Reservoir. The Moormans originates in the mountains and is clear and free of sediment and excess nutrients. The Rivanna water on the other hand, requires more extensive treatment including sediment and nutrient removal and higher chlorination. This plan will pull ALL the water that the city and county needs out of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir even as it silts in. Likewise, all water storage will be consolidated at the newly expanded Ragged Mountain Reservoir even though it will come within 100 feet of I-64 when expanded, putting it at risk of accidental or intentional harm.

- 2) City water bills will skyrocket

The city is already facing the immediate need for water infrastructure upgrades involving sewer line and stormwater management, for which city residents will have to pay a hefty utility fee. Adding the cost of expansion of the water supply will send water and sewer rates soaring. While it is assumed this project will go forward, no one can or will tell city residents what proportion they must pay and how it will affect their monthly bills. Water rates could easily double and more.

- 3) There will be decreased flow in the Rivanna River along city parks including the Greenbelt in the city

The water intake pipe at the SFRR is north of the city. Whatever streamflow is left after intake is allowed to go over the dam into the downstream reaches of the Rivanna River – the only substantial source of water for three miles of the river. After merging with the North Fork, the river continues for another five miles past Pen Park, Darden Towe Park and Riverview Park. Today, an average of 8-9 million gallons a day is pulled from the SFRR. That figure will double to support a larger population – and as much as 25 million gallons per day will be drawn when recharging the Ragged Mountain Reservoir.

Eight million gallons is regarded as a minimum flow. Today, 8 mgd or more goes over the dam 97% of the time. That level of low-flow will be allowed to fall to 50% under the new plan.

No information has been made available on the impact of doubling or tripling the water intake on the river downstream from the dam.

- 4) The headaches of population growth in the county.

The plan increases our water resources by 9.9 million gallons per day. At 100 gallons per person per day (RWSA standard) that is enough for 99,000 MORE people.

SFRR = South Fork Rivanna Reservoir
Data/Information: RWSA website <http://www.rivanna.org/community.htm>
See in particular May 2006 permit document

WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR IT? YOU ARE!

November 8, 2007