

LOCAL

Drought has had little effect on Moss Lake

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Water continues to trickle into the equation of past, present and future outlooks in every municipality. In times of drought, lakes and reservoirs become a bargaining commodity.

Kings Mountain has taken no exception. As the drought of 2007 drips into 2008, city leaders are pleased with their current resources and look to the future, mouths watering. "We have been blessed with the foresight of many including John Henry Moss with Moss Lake. We've been able to continue our water usage without any restrictions," said Mayor Rick Murphrey.

At the last City Council meeting on January 30, Water Director Dennis Wells gave an update on the drought's effects on Moss Lake. He told the council that the lake level was down seven inches below full pond. The most recent reading taken on Monday, showed the lake level down only three inches below full pond.

He said that most people try to compare this drought with the one the city faced in 2002 "and it's not a good comparison."

"The rainfall in 2002 was 46.95 inches and the rainfall was tremendously lower in 2007," Murphrey said, looking at the report from Wells. "He's saying in '02 the lowest lake level was down 55 inches below full pond. But in '07 the lowest we got was in September and it got down 32 inches below full pond."

Wells noted that the difference between the two levels was that they had lowered the lake by eight feet earlier in 2002. "That's why it was much lower even though we got more rain in 2002 than we did in 2007," Murphrey said. "We continue to monitor it every week and during the drought we've been checking the level every day."

He said that in the throes of the 2002 drought, the city worked on lowering their intake. "We prepared again for

the drought by lowering that," he added. When the lake levels would drift lower, the intake valve would be deeper-set to have less of an impact on intake. In 2002, the city withdrew 1,740,000,893 gallons of water. Last year, the city withdrew 1,183,380,000 gallons.

Sixty-seven counties in North Carolina, including Cleveland, are still listed under Exceptional Drought - the worst level. Even though mandatory restrictions have been issued in neighboring communities, no restrictions have been placed on city customers during this drought. Instead Kings Mountain has even helped other nearby municipalities meet their water needs.

"Bessemer City had a severe problem meeting their water demands and for about a month and a half the City of Kings Mountain supplied over half of their water needs, in addition to Grover, where we supply all of their water needs continually," Wells said.

"We were glad that we were able to do that for our neighbors and they were a great customer for us," Murphrey said. "We have a connection with the Sanitary District in Upper Cleveland County for emergency situations, so we're ready if they need us also."

Equipped with the valuable Moss Lake, the City of Kings Mountain has provided water aide to several municipalities over the years, including Shelby. Murphrey said that they are grateful for the vision of the leaders that came before and created Moss Lake. "Today we continue to have that vision by continuing to work to secure an additional impoundment," he said. "We continue to work with HDR Engineering to secure an additional lake and that process is ongoing."

If all goes as planned, Murphrey said, the city could have a new lake in eight-nine years.

Recent readings of the lake level at Moss Lake can be found on the city's website at www.cityofkm.com/lakeoffice_0.asp

City seeks area towns' support for second lake

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The gold rush of the 1940s may be the water rush of the 2050s. "Water is going to be one of the most valuable natural resources that we have," said Mayor Rick Murphrey.

Kings Mountain predicts that the city's population will continue to increase. In 2050, studies predict: a city population of 36,400 and a county population of 187,300. It is also predicted that the current KM residential water connections (about 4,000) will increase to 12,900 in 42 years. More water will be needed to meet those demands.

"As we look out some 50 years, to supply the normal growth that is going to happen, which will be tremendous growth in the next 10-20 years, and to make sure that industries will come in with jobs, we'll have to have an additional impoundment," said Murphrey. "There's only so much water. That's where economic growth will come from."

The city has been working with HDR Engineers on the proposal for increased output at

Moss Lake and on the idea of a second reservoir. A study conducted by HDR has said that an additional impoundment will be needed for this area, he said.

With this vision in mind, Murphrey, HDR and other city delegates set a plan in action to quench that future thirst. They have visited eight neighboring municipalities over the past few months to ask for their endorsement of a second lake.

"The City of Kings Mountain is exploring options to increase its existing water supply," he told neighboring leaders at their council meetings. "These options include increasing the availability of water from the Moss Lake Reservoir as well as potentially constructing a new reservoir to provide Moss Lake an additional supply to the region."

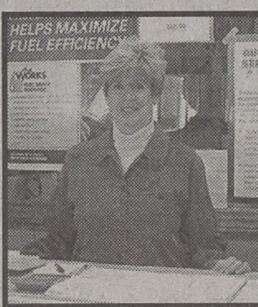
HDR has conducted studies to examine the current reservoir and the one of the future. "We're looking at our treatment plant and what can be done there to expand," Murphrey said. "We're doing a lot of studying of Moss Lake to make sure that we maximize the with-

drawal and make sure that we're still leaving it with a safe yield. Then we're also studying, of course, for the future, the additional water impoundment."

He said that there are more regulations today and the process of acquiring a second lake will be tedious, but worthy. "We need to take care of the needs of our children's children and I think that, on your watch, that's what you should do," he said. "We must be visionary and not reactionary."

The city attended council meetings in Grover, Bessemer City, Cherryville, Waco, Boiling Springs and Shelby and commission meetings in Cleveland and Gaston counties to present their findings. The city has received letters of endorsement from every municipality they visited, except for Shelby. The proposed second reservoir would lie east of Moss Lake. It would hold about 3.9 billion gallons of water and have a drainage basin area of about 31.2 square miles. It would be about a third of the size of Moss Lake.

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