

## **EDITORIAL: Despite criticism, arrival of sewage plant may actually clean up Bull Hide Creek**

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

So much for talk of the Bull Hide Creek area near Lorena being “pristine.”

Despite claims by some living nearby who argue a new sewer treatment plant would pollute what they contend is unspoiled rustic splendor, the city of Waco is now compelled to spend about \$115,000 to remove thousands of tires — some decades old — that have been dumped in the area, creating an environmental mess.

That’s on top of \$24,000 to remove old barrels and tanks of oil and diesel that had been stored on land at the site purchased by the Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewer System for its sewer treatment plant.

All this lends credence to what sewer system officials have repeatedly told us — that the 232 acres where the plant is planned will be a heck of a lot cleaner afterward than before.

City officials also dismiss persistent charges that the creek will be contaminated by human waste. In fact, Waco City Manager Larry Groth insists the water put into Bull Hide Creek once it leaves the treatment plant will be far more pristine than water upstream, where industry and other forms of runoff impact it.

A *Trib* editorial board member who toured the site with Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewer System officials concluded the plant, if built as now planned, won’t even intrude on the area’s scenic beauty, thanks to a grove of trees that neatly surrounds the plant site.

All together, it’s clear that the Waco Metropolitan Area Regional Sewer System has sought to address environmental concerns promptly and efficiently, even addressing environmental damage caused by others. Ricky Garrett, City of Waco utility director, says as many as 5,000 tires might have been dumped in the area, including the creek.

No one blames nearby residents for wishing the plant were going up elsewhere. That’s why some folks move to the country. And yet, it’s partially because of increased development in our county’s rural stretches that expanded and improved sewage infrastructure is sorely needed. For instance, the school district in nearby Lorena that educates youths from rural homes relies heavily on this system.

Officials say more than 11,000 septic systems operate in our county. They’re susceptible to overflow and malfunction. So this sewer system is not just a matter of meeting the future needs of metropolitan communities.

Sewage treatment is a crucial part of life for growing, forward-minded communities eager to draw businesses and satisfy future generations. And if sewage treatment plant plans address

both environmental and neighborhood concerns, as the WMARSS project appears to do, none of us really has justifiable cause for loud complaint.