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# Texas' Marvin Nichols Reservoir feud reaches 'conflict' status: 'We need to push back'

Now, the Texas Water Development Board will have to decide whether the conflict exists.



By **[Lana Ferguson](#)**

Energy and Natural Resources Reporter

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Jim Thompson (left), chair of Region D, raises his hand with fellow members voting unanimously to declare the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir an interregional conflict with the Region C Water Planning Group, which includes Dallas-Fort Worth and North Texas counties, during a meeting of the North East Texas Regional Water Planning Group D on Wednesday, April 9, 2025 in Pittsburg, Texas. (Smiley N. Pool / Staff Photographer)



PITTSBURG — Tensions over the proposed 66,000-acre Marvin Nichols Reservoir came to a head once again Wednesday as northeast Texas water planners unanimously voted to declare the project is an interregional conflict.

The declaration — which was expected — puts a pause on the controversial project as state officials will have to make a determination as to whether the conflict exists. An interregional conflict can occur if a water management strategy in one region’s plan’s will be supplied from another region’s area, according to the Texas Water Development Board.

“This has been brewing for a long, long, long time,” Region D Chairman Jim Thompson said ahead of the vote. “I know there are people probably on this board, and I know in the community, that think it’s a waste of time, that we won’t get a fair shake. ... These are the rules that we operate under and this is the only way can do it. We will never know unless we try.”

This is not a new stalemate between the Region C Water Planning Group, which includes Dallas-Fort Worth and North Texas counties, and Region D Water Planning Group, which includes the area along the Sulphur River Basin where the manmade lake would be constructed in portions of Franklin, Red River and Titus counties.



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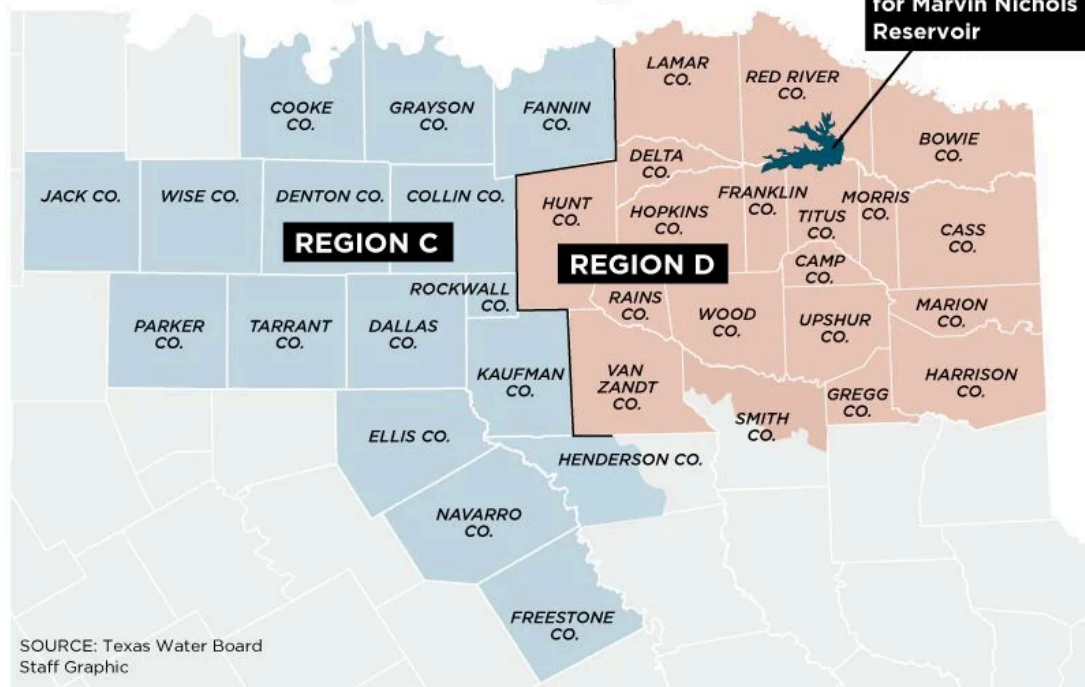
Region C planners have said for decades that the reservoir could be a part of the solution to the metroplex’s fast-growing need to secure more water for its surging population of both new residents and businesses. It would pump water more than 100 miles away to roughly 200 user groups in the state.

The demand for water has been a top-of-mind issue for leaders across the state, and with Region C’s population predicted to increase to 15.1 million, new water supplies like the reservoir are needed as soon as possible.

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## Texas Water Development Board regions

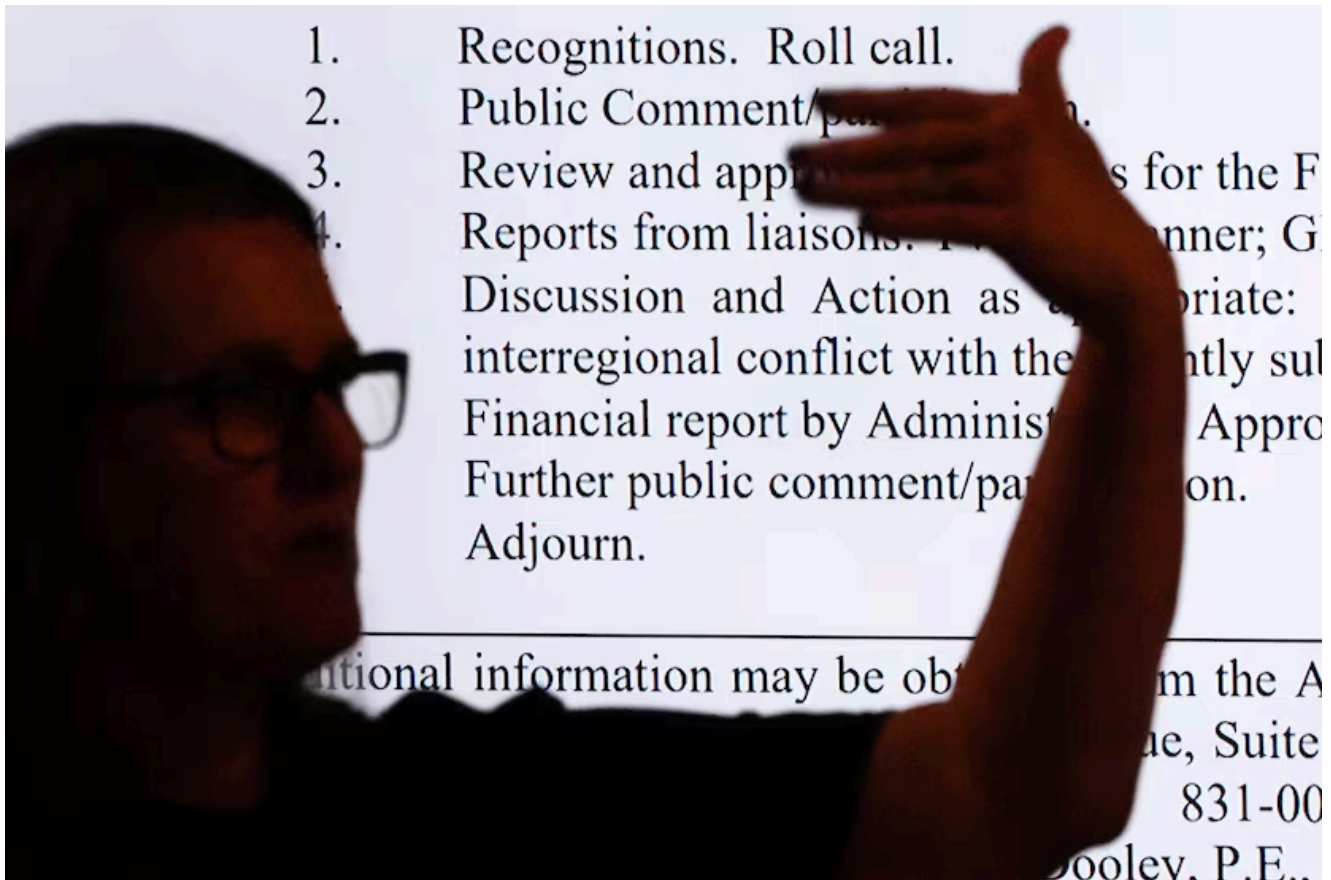


A [feasibility review](#) conducted by the Texas Water Development Board and submitted to Gov. Greg Abbott's office concluded the reservoir could [be completed and operating within the next 25 years](#).

Meanwhile, Region D officials and residents who would be displaced by the project, possibly through eminent domain, have [vehemently opposed the reservoir](#) and called for leaders to find other solutions to the state's thirst for water. Some residents compared the project to the Grim Reaper since it's loomed over their families since first being included in the 1968 State Water Plan.

**Related:** 'Nowhere to go': Northeast Texans beg officials to drop Marvin Nichols Reservoir plans

The northeast Texans aren't backing down, though, and made that clear at a special-called meeting Wednesday at the Region 8 Education Service Center in Pittsburg.



Susan Conway speaks out against the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir during a meeting where the North East Texas Regional Water Planning Group D voting unanimously to declare the proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir an interregional conflict with the Region C Water Planning Group on Wednesday, April 9, 2025 in Pittsburg, Texas. (Smiley N. Pool / Staff Photographer)

About two dozen people were in the audience as board members vocalized frustrations with Region C and accused them of not completing due diligence ahead of including Marvin Nichols Reservoir in their plan.

Multiple members said “the time is now” to take action.

“We need to push back and push back hard,” Howdy Lisenbee of Hunt County said.

Tuesday night ahead of Region D’s meeting, Region C’s chairman Dan Buhman penned a two-page letter requesting Region D to “refrain from asserting an ‘interregional conflict’ and prematurely

attempting to deprive Region C of this necessary, reasonable water supply option” for its communities.

Buhman wrote that reuse and conservation will not be enough for the Dallas-Fort Worth and surrounding areas so additional water supplies, like the reservoir, needs to be developed.

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“I feel at this point they’ve drawn the line in the sand with that letter,” Robert Hurst of Delta County said before making a motion to declare the conflict.

## **What happens now?**

Region D has to declare the interregional conflict in writing and submit it by early May, as the deadline set in the protocol is 60 days from when the draft submissions were due.

Next, the Texas Water Development Board’s executive administrator will review the information submitted and present it to the agency’s board.

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If the board deems a conflict exists, the administrator will try to resolve the conflict with the groups through mediation.

However, if a resolution can't be reached, the administrator will propose a solution, and hold a public hearing before making a recommendation to the board.

Then, the board will consider statements from both regional groups before determining a resolution. The board's decision is final, and cannot be appealed.

If the conflict isn't resolved early enough before the October deadline for the 2026 regional water plans to be finalized and submitted to the Texas Water Development Board, the groups likely will have to modify their plans by excluding the strategy and "all language relevant to the conflict" further stalling any progress on the reservoir.

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Each group is required to hold at least one public hearing on its draft: Region D's will be 10 a.m. May 14 at the same building in Pittsburg and Region C's is scheduled for 1 p.m. May 19 at the North Central Texas Council of Governments building in Arlington.

**Video: Northeast Texans residents voice opposition to proposed Marvin Nichols Reservoir**

Residents and officials speak out against a proposed \$7 billion reservoir along the Sulphur River that would pump water more than 100 miles to Dallas-Fort Worth

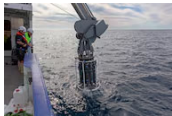
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By **Lana Ferguson**

Lana Ferguson covers energy and natural resources for the business team. She joined The Dallas Morning News in 2022 after a stint in South Carolina's Lowcountry. The Virginia native graduated from the University of Mississippi with a degree in journalism and Southern studies. Her work has taken her all over the U.S., southern Africa and Sri Lanka.

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