

RAGGED MOUNTAIN RESERVOIR REPORT

On Friday, August 30, 1996, a meeting was held at City Hall to discuss the Ivy Creek Foundation proposal to have the Ragged Mountain Reservoir property designated as a natural area to be managed by ICF in a similar fashion as ICNA. In attendance at that meeting were Kay Slaughter, Leon Churchill, Judy Muehler, Satyendra Huja, and Ron Higgins from the City, Charlotte Humphris and Pat Mullaney from the County, Art Petrini and Gene Potter from RWSA, and Dan Bieker, Dee Dee Smith and Francis Fife from ICF.

The initial development being considered for the property includes a small parking area on an adjacent piece of privately owned property and an approximate 3 mile nature trail around the lower reservoir. ICF officials have a letter expressing willingness from the adjacent property owner to consider making a portion of his land available for the parking area. Most recent discussions indicate the property owner favors transferring ownership of the property to the City, County, or ICF. ICF proposes to lay out, construct, post, monitor and maintain the trails, as well as handle public inquiries and distribute information. The City and County would be asked to provide funds for trail construction materials and hazard mitigation. ICF has secured grant funding in the amount of \$15,000 for the construction of the parking area.

The discussion was generally favorable of this project. There were several potential liability hazards pointed out by RWSA officials. The group agreed that a staff analyses of the pro's and con's of the project, including initial and on going costs, review of the hazards, and other general concerns, should be provided to the group for further discussion. Ms. Humphris asked Mr. Mullaney to prepare such a report. Mr. Mullaney said he would prepare a draft report and pass it on to Mr. Churchill, for any deletions or additions, and then the report would be finalized and submitted to the group for review. On September 13, 1996, Mssrs. Churchill, Fife, Bieker and Mullaney visited the site and walked the proposed trail with Richard Defibaugh of RWSA and Bob Crickenberger of County Parks and Recreation.

Project Positives:

1. Tremendous opportunity to get additional public benefit from a 980 acre tract of publicly owned land in a way that would not have a significant adverse impact on it's primary use as a water supply.
2. Will relieve some of the heavy usage that Ivy Creek receives.
3. Large tract of unspoiled, rugged, publicly-accessible land with remote parking area offers a truly unique wilderness hiking

different from that found at Ivy Creek, hiking\ fishing, nature study opportunity close to town.

4. Willingness of Ivy Creek Foundation to build and monitor trails for the City and County makes this an opportunity that can be provided at a minimal expense to City and County taxpayers.

5. Ivy Creek Foundation's outstanding track record with the City and County for land stewardship and educational programming at ICNA.

6. Monitoring of area by ICF and increased use of area for legal use will discourage current illegal use.

Concerns:

1. Initial and ongoing costs to be incurred by the City and County.
2. Three potential hazard areas:
 - a. Diversion box covers
 - b. Access to upper gate house
 - c. Water line tunnel from Sugar Hollow
3. Potential erosion at upper lake spillway where trail crosses.
4. The impact of the increased use on the water resource.
5. Creating an attraction to encourage additional trespassing through Ednam Forest.
6. Would this create a need to reconsider the current parking permit system for fisherman?
7. Will increased access to this area create a demand for more and better access by boat fisherman and others?

Discussion of Concerns:

1. Initial and on going costs - The initial costs to be incurred by the City and County are estimated at \$5,000 for the materials for trail development and the mitigation of hazards. Initial costs for trail development could easily increase to the \$20,000 range if bridging 4 stream crossings was deemed necessary. However, given the length and difficulty of the trail from the parking area to the stream crossings, it was determined during the site visit, that anyone who can make it to the stream crossings can easily negotiate them by means of a few well placed steps. This decision is also well-suited for a more rugged trail that Ragged Mountain could serve.

The cost of the parking area was originally estimated at \$20,000 by ICF. The plans have been reviewed by City and County Engineering Department staff. Preliminary estimates by the

County Engineering Department and a private contractor were in the \$15,000 range which is the amount of the ICF grant for this purpose. If the project is approved, it is advised that the City and County could anticipate potential additional costs of up to \$5,000 for cost overruns and for surveying and appraisal costs associated with the land donation for the parking area.

Ongoing costs would include salary costs of approximately \$3650/yr. for an employee to open and close the gate and clean up the parking area each day as needed. A porta john should be provided at the parking area at the cost of \$1200/yr. The involvement of ICF greatly reduces annual operating costs.

2. Hazard mitigation - The field inspection revealed two diversion box covers that will need to be secured and the need to dismantle the bridge to the upper dam gate house. The water line tunnel from Sugar Hollow is not easy to find or access from the proposed trail and was not viewed during the site inspection. A grate can be fashioned to secure access into the tunnel. Cost of hazard mitigation is estimated at less than \$2,000 and is included in the \$5,000 start up material expenses.

3. Erosion at upper lake spillway - There is concern about erosion where the trail crosses the spillway. RWSA engineers should review the trail plan to make sure this is adequately addressed. Nothing can be placed in the spillway that will raise the current level or impede the flow of water through it.

4. Impact of increased use on water resource - The Water Resources Manager has reviewed this use and believes it can be done with a very minimal impact. Due to the stewardship of ICF and the clientele expected to be attracted by this type of facility, it is anticipated that this use may actually discourage current illegal uses of the property.

5. It is not anticipated that this type of facility would encourage additional trespassing through Ednam Forest. These improvements would allow area residents to better access the property in a legal fashion.

6. Consideration on revising the current permit parking system - This project would not necessarily create a need to revise the current system. The relatively remote parking area would not lead to additional boat traffic on the lake, unless more fisherman decided to leave their boats at the lake after getting one of the current permits. If anything, this practice of allowing boats to be left should be revisited. Even if a boat is left at the reservoir it is unlikely that many fishermen would want to carry their gear, battery, and motor from the parking area to the lake.

7. Create demand for better access - This is possible. Ragged Mountain is a beautiful property. The designation of the property as a natural area from the onset as requested by Ivy

Creek should be done if better future access is deemed undesirable.

Recommendation:

City and County staff believe this is a good project with more benefits than costs. The concerns are manageable and not significant enough to prohibit the project. The parking area is a critical aspect of the project. A formal agreement, on the lease or purchase of the private property, needs to be reached as the first step if approval is received by the City, County and RWSA to proceed. The \$5,000 for initial trail development and hazard mitigation, along with any operating costs prior to June 30, 1997, should be absorbed to the extent possible by the current Towe Park budget. Once the facility is operational the Towe Park crew should assume responsibility for general supervision and assistance to ICF volunteers who will be providing direct supervision. The County Parks and Recreation Director should provide administrative and policy oversight and assistance to ICF as is currently done with ICNA. Any cost associated with the development of the parking lot, which is beyond the \$15,000 ICF funding should be shared from the City and County's current Capital Improvements Program. Since the property is owned by the City, the City Attorney Office should do the legal work related to the property acquisition, and City Engineering should provide oversight for the parking lot project. Bills for direct costs incurred for legal work (survey, title search, appraisal, etc.) should be submitted to the County Parks and Recreation Director for payment from the Towe Park budget.