

To Subscribe or Advertise Call 1-325-655-4434

RANCH & RURAL LIVING

www.ranchmagazine.com

JULY 2013

**The Buffalo
Hunters** PAGE 21

**Shooting Sports
Offer Family Time**

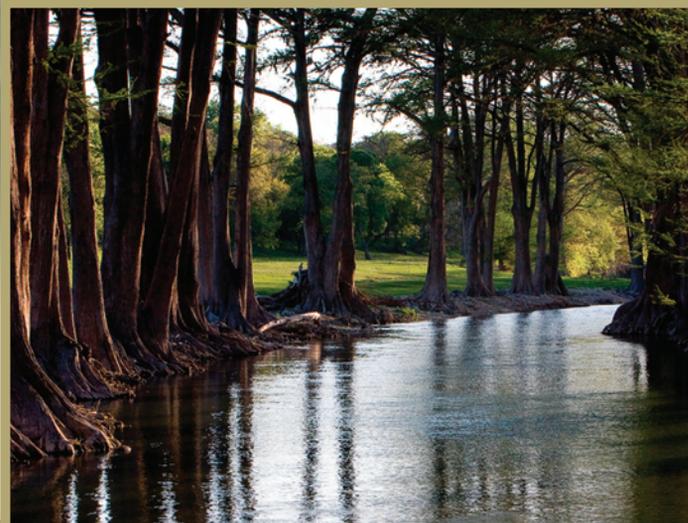
PAGE 7

By Mike Mecke
Retired Natural Resources & Water Specialist
(830) 896-0805 mmecke@stx.rr.com

water

What is Our Water Future?

Does that affect food supply?



The Guadalupe River meanders peacefully through cypress trees in Central Texas. The river can turn into a raging torrent with a good rain over its large watershed.

I POSE THESE questions because, does anyone know for sure? Many experts and informed persons are talking about these crucial topics, but a whole lot of people in Texas, the U.S. and the world don't seem overly concerned. Hello, out there? Anyone listening?

Strange, when you consider the serious water and/or food issues, from those that have already occurred locally here in Texas to issues affecting millions of people in Africa, Asia or India. Do we think we are "bullet-proof" here in Texas and the USA? Sure, we have been blessed with great natural resources from sea to shining sea. Our unique and wonderfully blended American citizens have long led the world in spirit, ambition, inventions, manufacturing and distribution and in caring for those who need help across the world.

I was reading recently an article by Dr. Alex Dehgan, U.S. Agency for International Development's (US AID) science and technology adviser to the administrator, that "Fundamentally, the planet is changing," adding that "**by 2050 approximately 9 billion people will be living on the planet, putting increasing strains on both water and food security** (my emphasis)." If that doesn't get your full attention, then I don't know what will—that is only 37 years from now folks! Think of the problems here and worldwide that you now see on the evening news or read about. Especially in exploding populations in Asia, India, Africa and Latin America—population and growth management, to me, are going to be equally important as conserving and managing properly our water and agriculture. Or maybe more so.

What do water resources have to do with food and agriculture? Doesn't rain

provide for most? Yes, often that is true, but far from all production. In '07 USDA reported that 40 percent of the value of all ag products was from irrigated agriculture! And, remember, we are not just talking row crops or orchards, but irrigated pastures, hay fields and forage crops for livestock and poultry. The water used by irrigated agriculture is a primary target of most large utilities and cities across America. It is close, it is cheaper and cities have the votes and dollars to go get it. And many Americans are not really seeing the total picture and the sum of those losses—not just now, but in 50 or 100 years.

Many years ago, the USDA began a program to quantify and rate the remaining farmlands, especially important around towns and cities where growth is often rapid and poorly planned. It was thought that the highest value farmland, Classes I and II, or irrigated lands, would be "zoned out" and preserved for present and future agricultural production. If you study growth from California to Arizona to Texas and to the Southeast, you will see again and again where subdivisions, malls, roads, military installations, public buildings and industry have spread out over these fertile lands. North to South it is the same result. Green valuable riparian zones and valleys are now golf courses or recreation areas not used for livestock. Development affects our present and future agricultural production. It increases commodity transportation costs and creates heat islands. It costs ag industry jobs and causes loss of wildlife habitat. Paving flood plains increases the damage costs of floods and raises the likelihood of human injury and death. Recharge for aquifers is paved or built over and lost, reducing aquifer levels.

Just in Texas, think of the loss of valuable agricultural lands and production around El Paso, Lubbock, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Corpus Christi, Houston and hundreds of smaller cities and towns. The sum total of all these acres and their potential production would be staggering. We are not planning and developing in an intelligent manner. Throw in our present and forecasted climate change effects—what then?

Thinking of our nation's upcoming July 4th celebrations made me wonder how really aware the majority of our government's political and agency leaders of these impending issues. Do they really care? In our seats of government, whether city, county, Austin or Washington D.C., there seems to largely be a vacuum of true political statesmen or stateswomen. Most, seem to be concerned about fulfilling campaign promises to PACs or other supporters and getting re-elected. Many talk big and often, but little of real practical consequence is accomplished at the end of each year. Committees and appointed groups meet, talk and come up with great sounding plans or often good intelligent recommendations, which then mostly gather dust on shelves. Remember the good 9/11 Committee Report?

I don't want to throw water on our upcoming July 4th celebrations, we need to always celebrate, honor and serve our wonderful nation. But, the time has come for all or at least, many more of us to become informed of important issues and facts facing us and then be active and vote in a positive, Christian manner in deciding our government's path and future—from city hall to Washington, D.C.

GOD BLESS TEXAS AND AMERICA! ♦