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Caddo Lake Coalition rejects Marshall plan

By REBECCA HOPKINS
News Messenger

The Caddo Lake Coalition has rejected the city of Marshall's proposed water mitigation agreement and will fight at the state level and in the courts the city's request for the right to provide millions of gallons of water to a proposed power plant.

"They offered us nothing to go forward on," said Dwight Shellman, president of the Caddo Lake Institute and lead negotiator for the coalition. "We are now going to take this in the court system and the

TNRCC (Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission)."

He made the announcement at a Tuesday night meeting of a Caddo Lake management group in Karnack.

Shellman predicted that Entergy would have to find another water source while the coalition fights the city's request for water rights amendments.

"I will predict that this process will require extensive time in both the TNRCC and the courts," he said.

Shellman accused the city of avoiding a commitment to a

long-term mitigation by claiming that the coalition's contract would be illegal.

"All we got was vague references to legality and vague references to the city not wanting to tie its hands," Shellman said. "That really means they simply don't want to make an agreement for long term replacement."

Officials from both the city and Entergy have said they have tried to meet Shellman's concerns regardless of the cost.

But representatives from the

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various organizations that constitute the Caddo Lake Coalition read their own statements about the rejection of the city's proposal, prompting applause from the 60 or so Caddo area residents at Tuesday night's meeting.

Those members, as well as 250 Caddo residents, had already taken a first step in that fight by submitting letters to the TNRCC after Shellman called off negotiations last month. Shellman had offered the city a contract to purchase water from Lake O' the Pines to replace water that Entergy would use from Caddo Lake for a power plant. But Mayor Ed Smith said he was concerned the terms would be illegal and were too far-reaching. Smith said the city was trying to take Shellman's principal ideas and put them in a language and manner upon which the city could agree.

But in that process, Shellman said the city lost touch. And the city's concerns with the legality of Shellman's

contract were unfounded, he said.

"It's not a good-faith negotiation," Shellman said. "It's rejecting the principals we agreed on in the first place. We had a party we were negotiating with who didn't mean (to negotiate) to where you've determined that there's no common ground to negotiate."

"This business about this being illegal is pettifogging and misleading and does not appear to be true."

And because of what he believes to be the city's avoidance of his principals, he said he hasn't contacted the city, nor does he plan to contact the city about his rejection of their proposal.

"What they did to us is not worthy of a direct response," Shellman said.

Shellman said his main concern with the city's proposal is that it does not address the problem of the city's allocation of money in the future to purchase replacement water during long-term droughts.

The city already has an

agreement with the Cypress Valley Navigation District to set up a fund to purchase replacement water from Lake O' the Pines so that when

water doesn't flow over the spillway during a drought, the water Entergy withdraws from Caddo Lake won't further lower the lake levels.