

# WATER - Our Area's Most Important Resource



**Pipeline Groundbreaking!** Robert Lee City officials were joined by Coke County officials, State Representative Drew Darby, USDA representatives, Vermeer representatives, project engineers, and many others at the water pipeline groundbreaking ceremony held Friday, January 20, 2012.



**Pipeline Volunteers!** This group of volunteers worked late on Thursday, February 2, 2012, to complete the 4.5 mile portion of the waterline to Bronte. The pipeline contractor was responsible for the remaining 7.5 miles to the treatment facility in Bronte.

[Editor's Note: This is the first article in a series documenting the water situation in Robert Lee and Coke County. In this issue, we will look back a few years to see exactly how dire the water situation was for the people of Robert Lee.]

The year 2011 was a nightmare for Coke County in more ways than one. Of course, as we all remember, it was the year of the fires. However, it was also the year Robert Lee almost ran out of water. The drought which added to the fire danger also caused available water supplies to drop. With this drop, the water conditions at Lake Spence, Robert Lee's main source of drinking water, became unsafe with dissolved particles too plentiful to run through filtration.

Through cooperation with city officials in Bronte, it was determined a pipeline to Bronte would be the best solution to the immediate problem. Years ago, the city of Robert Lee was given

an allotment of water at Oak Creek Reservoir near Blackwell. Due to the distance involved and water more readily available at Lake Spence, Robert Lee had never used this allotment. Officials in Bronte and Robert Lee worked out an agreement for Bronte to allow Robert Lee's allotment from Oak Creek Reservoir to run through Bronte's pipeline to the water treatment plant in Bronte where it would be treated before entering the proposed pipeline to Robert Lee. The agreement, along with an additional contract between the cities of Bronte and Robert Lee and Upper Colorado River Authority, are available under the "Contracts" tab on the homepage of ObserverEnterprise.com.

Former Robert Lee mayors Joe White and John Jacobs, along with all members of the Robert Lee City Council, worked with representatives of Region F, the Texas Water

Development Board, and the Texas Department of Agriculture to obtain funding for this project. Robert Lee's engineer, James Busby, delivered the applications in person to each agency in order to expedite the grant process.

The funding required volunteer participation for 4.5 miles of the pipeline from the community members in Robert Lee. The citizens of Robert Lee stepped up to the plate and in true Texas open heart tradition, Bronte community members also donated their time and labor to the pipeline construction. In addition to local companies, Vermeer provided a giant ditching machine for the project.

Due to the generous donations of time, expertise, equipment and labor, the pipeline was completed a good deal ahead of schedule. This was fortunate. At the time the pipeline construction was completed, Robert Lee was only six weeks from being totally out of water.



**Local Company Works to Clear Right-of-Way!** Caston Company, LLC donated their equipment, time and labor to help satisfy Robert Lee's contribution for the volunteer requirements of the STEP grant program. The company cleared 4.5 miles on the west end of the right-of-way. Shown are three generations of the Caston family (from left) Ginny Caston - granddaughter; Leta Caston and her son and Ginny's father, Marty Caston.



**It's Begun!** The construction of the trench for the water pipeline began Tuesday, January 17, 2012. The huge machine, along with the operator, were donated by Vermeer.



**Miles of Pipe!** The moon shines its last rays before the sun came up as Edwin Brosh of WEB Construction unloaded one of the trucks laden with the miles of pipe necessary for the water pipeline project.



**Water Pipeline!** Roberts Construction of San Angelo began their section of the water pipeline at the Bronte water treatment plant. They are shown in late February 2012 covering up the section of pipe under the bridge over Highway 158 at the west edge of Bronte. Texas Water and Soil Company of San Angelo picked up where Robert Lee's volunteer requirement ended and headed west. They continued west to Double Barrel Road and then turned north to meet the Roberts Construction section at the intersection of Hwy 158 and Double Barrel Road.