

# THE OBSERVER/ ENTERPRISE

*Serving Coke County*



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## Water – Our Area's Most Important Resource

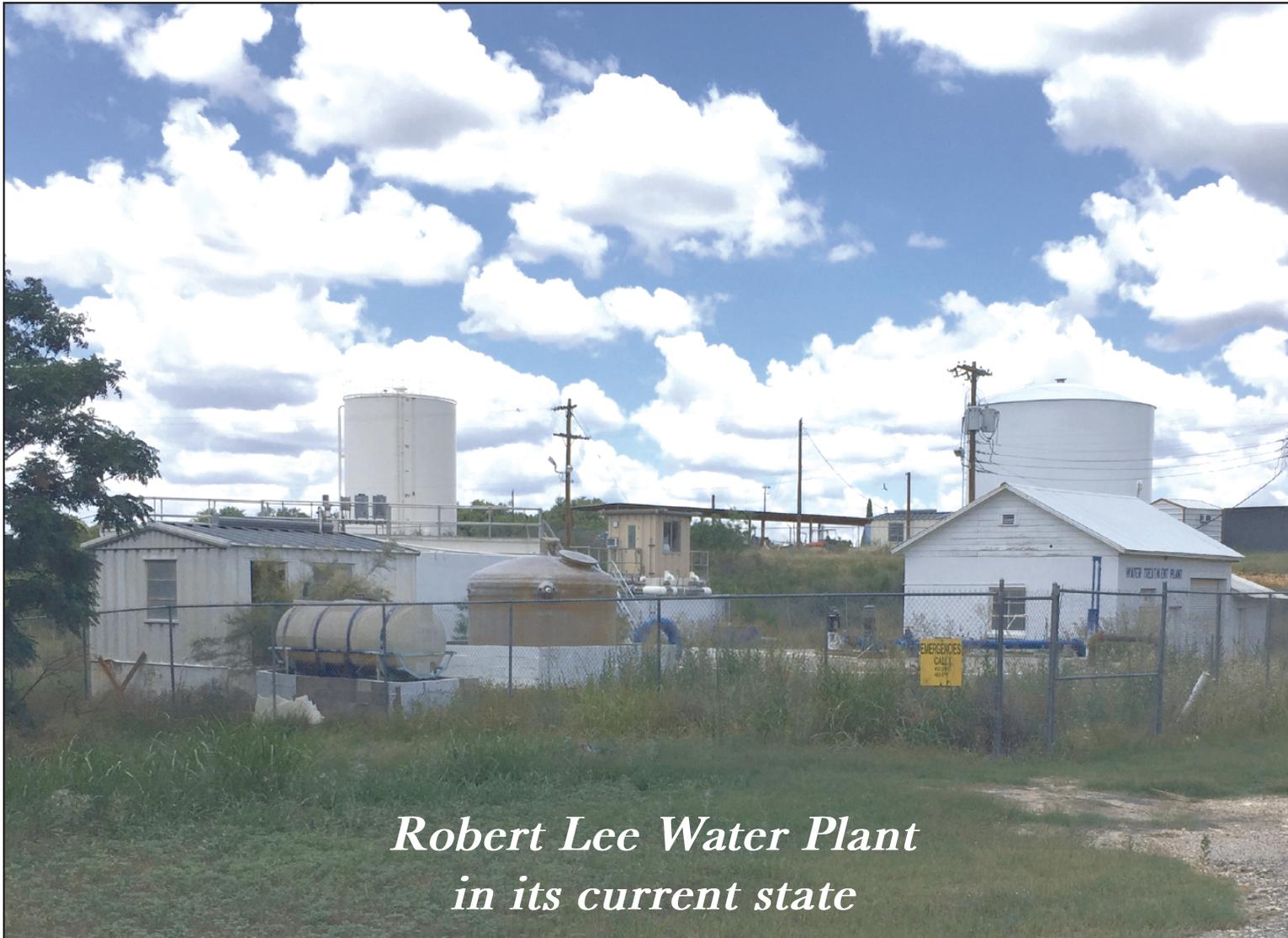
*[Editor's Note: This is the second article in a series documenting the water situation in Robert Lee and Coke County. Current Robert Lee Mayor Leroy Casey has been generous with his time and providing the information necessary for this series.]*

The water pipeline connecting the citizens of Robert Lee to the Bronte water plant was completed in the spring of 2012. At the time of completion, Robert Lee was a mere six weeks away from totally running out of drinkable water.

Since this time, Robert Lee city officials have continued to search for other sources of water and deal with decades old problems to the city's infrastructure caused by the Lake Spence water.

Just before the switch was made to the pipeline, TDS levels (total dissolved solids) in the Lake Spence water were measuring 29,000 ppm (parts per million). The levels in the Spence water this year are at 18,000 ppm. Texas

Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) standards are from between 500 ppm to 800 ppm. With these high levels, Robert Lee's elderly water plant could not clean the water from Lake Spence. In order to meet requirements using any Lake Spence water running through the Robert Lee water plant, the percentages of good water to Lake Spence water was 90% good water to 10% Lake Spence water. City officials were forced to consider the costs of all involved. Although partial funding was offered by the Texas Water Development Board to upgrade the water plant, city officials determined it



*Robert Lee Water Plant  
in its current state*

was not cost effective to attempt to continue using the Robert Lee water plant and with the 90-10 ratio it would be easier to provide treated water from Bronte to their customers. Robert Lee did retain the license for its water plant that is now "temporarily" shut down.

Under the leadership of former Mayor John Jacobs, the city first began to explore on the Counts property off FM 2034 on the divide between Robert Lee and Water Valley. Of the five wells drilled, only one well

could be considered good quality. In order to move forward, quantity needed to be at least 100 gallons per minute (GPM). It also needed to recover quickly to be sustainable as a source of city water. Unfortunately this well couldn't recover in a timely fashion.

Exploration next moved to the Judy May family property adjoining the Counts property. One well was drilled providing good water at a rate of 20-30 gpm. Another well provided water at 15 gpm. Another was a

dry hole. Altogether eight holes were drilled on the divide with 1 good well and 1 marginal well producing a 12% success rate. This exploration cost the City of Robert Lee approximately \$195,000 plus interest on loans obtained from the Upper Colorado River Authority (UCRA) and Texas Water Development Board (TWDB).

With the seating of current Robert Lee Mayor Leroy Casey, a 29 shot seismic survey was conducted on the divide. This survey revealed one possible well similar to those already found and two of lesser quantities. The survey cost approximately \$5,000.

Mayor Casey put together the cost of pads, fencing and roads for the wells already drilled and those found with the seismic survey. He estimated the cost of just this part of the infrastructure on these four wells to be over \$1,500,000. This is not accounting for the cost of completion with pumps, casing, tanks and a pipeline. With the high cost of completion, this field on the divide was abandoned.

### **Retirement Celebration to honor Waldrop set for Wednesday**

A retirement celebration honoring Donna Waldrop will be held Wednesday, July 19, 2017, at the USDA Services office at 214 E. 7th in Robert Lee. Snacks and refreshments will be served from 9 am until 4 pm.

Donna has assisted producers in Coke County for almost 28 years. Along the way, many of the landowners have come to be her friend. All of her friends are welcome to come by during this retirement celebration.

### **RLBC Vacation Bible School slated**

A Vacation Bible School will be hosted by Robert Lee Baptist Church Monday, July 24, through Thursday, July 27, from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Children who have completed Kindergarten through 6th grade are welcome to attend and "Discover God's Everlasting Love" during a "Bible Blast to the Past".

The week will conclude with a Pool Party on Friday, July 28.

## Emergency Siren Signals

*Cities of both Bronte and Robert Lee*

**1 Long Ring - Wind Advisory over 60 mph**

**2 Rings - Fire or VFD Meeting**

**Another 2 Ring - Call for Additional Firefighters**

**3 Rings - Tornado Warning**

**1 Long Continuous Ring - All Clear for Tornado**

**4 Rings - Alarm Test**