

City Water Puzzle Storage Lake Favored Near Doylestown Jericho Creek Site Favored

Last of a Series

By Richard J. O'Keefe

The Upper Lehigh Project for a new Philadelphia water supply discards the idea of a storage reservoir in the rich farmland area near Warrington in favor of a storage lake in the 14,000-acre area on Jericho Creek, about seven miles south-east of Doylestown.

A natural bowl, engineers of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, sponsors of the plan, say the proposed Jericho Reservoir can hold a reserve of 37½ billion gallons of water, sufficient for a six-month supply for the city.

30 PROPERTY HOLDERS

On the site of the reservoir there are about 30 property holders. The area of the reservoir would cover 4.3 square miles. Some of the land is cultivated and the balance is timbered.

The reservoir would be created by the construction of two dams across Jericho Creek, one two miles south-west of Cowabawh and the other about one mile east of Pineville. The maximum height of the main dam, that near Brownsville, would be 216 feet and that of the dam near Pineville 125 feet. The bowl-like conformation of the land on the site, engineers say, would enable the storage of almost three times the amount of water that could be stored in proposed saucer-like reservoir suggested by the Water Commission engineers.

The right of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company to the exclusive use of the water of the Lehigh River was contested during the public hearings.

FIRST GOt RIGHT IN 1922

The Complan contends that right was given by the State Legislature in 1922 and subsequent court proceedings. It holds, cemented its ownership to the river water.

As an adjunct to the Upper Lehigh project, company engineers suggested an additional water supply of 165,000 gallons daily could be provided by creating a reservoir on McMichael's Creek near Stroudsburg and using the water of that stream with that of Pocono and Broadhead Creeks.

NO ESTIMATE OF COST

No estimate of cost to construct McMichael's Reservoir was submitted since the engineers do not believe it will be necessary to draw that supply. The area of McMichael's Creek is heavily populated, with a number of industries and rich farms adding to the cost potential of the site.

A water plan that refines both the Upper Delaware and the Upper Lehigh as sources of the city's supply has been advanced by the Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade of Philadelphia.

COST PUT AT \$115,168,000

A special committee of the organization under the chairmanship of Dr. A. G. Griffith proposes to continue studying the Delaware River by moving upstream to a point north of Trenton sewage enters the river the intake that is now in operation at Torresdale. The cost of this improvement is estimated at \$115,168,000.

The project contemplates the ultimate discontinuance of the Schuylkill as a source for Philadelphia water, elimination of odors and increased filtering capacity and complete metering of water usage.

NUMBER AND COST OF PHILADELPHIA FIRES

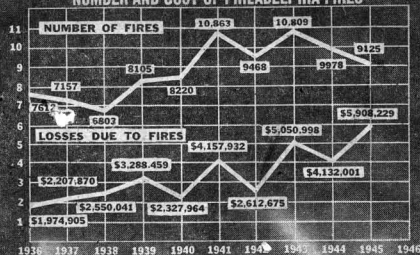


CHART BY INQUIRER STAFF
DATA OBTAINED FROM BOST 1776 ASSOCIATION

Water Meters Ownership

IT is by this time quite obvious that Philadelphia got off on the wrong foot in requiring property owners to buy their own water meters.

Other kinds of public utility meters rarely belong to the property owners or consumers. An electric company that finds a meter operating poorly takes out the old one and puts in another, and that is the end of it. When the city takes out a privately owned water meter, it must return that identical meter to the property after the repairs are made.

Philadelphians have bought a large variety of meters. That multiplies the difficulty of acquiring and stocking the parts needed for repairs.

About half the city's water services are metered, and universal metering is growing increasingly urgent both as a fair method of distributing costs and as a conservation measure. But all proposals to meter the remaining services have to stop for an argument about who will own the meters.

There are objections to city purchase, when half the owners have paid for their own. But there are also objections to going any deeper into the mess of private ownership of meters. Before the thing is done with, the city may find it desirable to buy the meters now privately owned. Greater simplicity and uniformity of administration might go far toward meeting the cost.

Do You Drink Sewage?

A BULLETIN reader undertakes in a letter to state the "real question" in the water problem. He states it as follows: "Are we satisfied to drink diluted, filtered, chlorinated sewage?"

It may sound like a fair question, but it isn't, because it suggests that the qualities of sewage are present when the water comes from the household's faucet.

Competent authorities have told Philadelphia that there is no source of supply available which would not require some treatment to remove contamination. But engineering achievement can put water through the same processes of reclamation that nature continually uses, and can do it not only just as efficiently, but much more quickly.

Some water is hard to reclaim; some easy. Philadelphia's water can be reclaimed at a cost lower than tapping mountain sources, and river clean-up measures promise even easier reclamation.

The test of water is not whether it has been contaminated at some time in the past, for there is probably no water in the world which has not been polluted at one time or another, but in the typhoid rate of those who consume Philadelphia's rate of practically zero is a telling argument for defenders of the present water sources.

of the Torresdale intake to Trenton to eliminate heavy pollution south of that city.

OTHER PROPOSALS LISTED

The program of the organization calls for improvements and changes within the city existing water facilities and using a cost figure of \$15,791,000 for the Wallpack Dam project for the Delaware River. Water claims a saving of nearly \$200,000,000. Other proposals for replacing or augmenting the city's present water supply are variations of the Delaware River Project favored by the Water Commission engineers, the Upper Lehigh Project and the plan of the Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade of Philadelphia.

DIFFER IN MINOR DETAILS

Some differ in only minor details as does that contemplating the use of the Upper Lehigh and the waters of Perkiomen and Tophick Creeks with a storage reservoir on Unami Creek near Quakertown.

The Upper Delaware River Basin Tributaries Project provides for the construction of reservoirs on six tributaries of the Delaware which drain the Pocono area. They are the Lackawanna River and the Shohola, Bushkill, Broadhead, McMichael's and Buckwa Creeks. A reservoir on Unami Creek also is proposed. Water Commission engineers estimate this as the most costly at \$300,250,000.

VERSION OF C. OF C. PLAN

The Delaware River-Vanderly Project is a version the Chamber of Commerce plan. It, however, contemplates the construction of four storage reservoirs on the Perkiomen Creek watershed and one on Tophick Creek.

Recently, H. S. Spalinski, of Trenton, president of Electric Power Company of New Jersey, Inc., advanced a plan by which his company would undertake to build a series of dams in the Delaware watershed of Bushkill and sell Philadelphia whatever it needed.

HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER

The Spalinski proposal also contemplates production of hydro-electric power which it would sell.

He explained this company proposes to finance the project through the sale of bonds and preferred stock or other securities.

In the event the city adopts his program which calls for a 135 billion gallon reservoir, he would give Philadelphia an option to buy the water system from the company. (The End)

Water Comes First

PHILADELPHIA today has in the offing a number of major civic improvements of wide variety. They include removal of the Chinese wall, extension of the transit service, furnishing express service in the subway, solving the parking problem and improving the water supply.

A Bulletin print pointed today shows that in the minds of the city's residents improvement of the water supply stands so far ahead of the rest, that they are hardly in its reckoning. When four out of five people simply on an undertaking in preference to all others, the priority is no accident.

Fortunately, water supply improvement is not only high on the list of projects, but actually under way. Coupled with the State's work in cleaning up the Schuylkill and the city's construction of sewage disposal facilities, the water program authorized before the war offers tremendous promise.

But anybody who expects to wake up some morning soon to find that the Schuylkill cocktail is no longer a part of the daily diet is doomed to disappointment. Like all major undertakings, this one will take a long time.

Let People Decide on Water Sources

The people of Philadelphia should decide for themselves, by ballot, where this city is to obtain its supply of drinking water—whether from the present, to be pulled sources or from upland streams.

The final report of the Mayor's Water Commission does little more than confront Philadelphia with the same old choice: keep what we have and try to improve it, or spend several hundred millions of dollars to obtain a new and much cleaner supply.

It is up to the people to act on that choice.

By giving their judgment at the polls they will be taking the water problem for the first time out of the realm of surveys, reports and conflicting recommendations in which it has been enmeshed for years.

They will be telling the city government exactly how they want water supply handled, removing the doubts and confusion on this score that have delayed improvements over the years.

They will be making it impossible for shyder politicians now out of office, and their shyder allies, to make the subject of better water for Philadelphia a political football.

There is no difference of opinion concerning the recommendation of the Water Commission for immediate rehabilitation of the filtration and distribution systems.

It is what would come after this preliminary improvement that is most vital to Philadelphians. The Commission, as the next step, urges a long-range program that it states would bring the present system "to the peak of efficiency needed to supply pure, palatable water." The cost would be \$63,000,000, or \$87,568,000 should the Schuylkill River be abandoned as a source and dependence placed entirely on the Delaware.

If, thereafter, the city desires an upland source, it is the Commission's opinion that the best location would be the upper Delaware River near Wallpack Bend. It concedes the water from there would be a great improvement over the present product and it places the cost at \$284,588,000.

But this plan is hedged about with diffi-

ties. An agreement with New York and New Jersey for the diversion of the water would be needed and Congress and the Supreme Court might have to pass on the matter, with consequent delays. More serious are the legal obstacles to condemning land required in the two other States.

The Commission says pointedly that if for legal reasons the Wallpack Bend project proves impractical, and the city still desires an upland source, "it will be necessary to select a source within this Commonwealth."

The Commission is not very helpful at this point. What source within Pennsylvania would be most suitable? It dismisses as unsatisfactory the so-called Lehigh plan, insisting that the sponsors' cost estimate of \$142,000,000 is too low.

It does state, however—in a terse footnote—that the upper Lehigh, Bear Creek and Mud Run as sources, supplemented by waters from the upper Perkiomen, will furnish 500 million gallons per day of acceptable water at a cost of \$377,240,000.

Is this to be considered the best available source within Pennsylvania? It is a pity the Commission has not devoted more attention to this site, instead of contenting itself with a footnote.

The people should be given the opportunity to express their wishes in the matter in a referendum placing the issue before them in unambiguous terms. If they are willing to continue taking their drinking water from the Delaware River docks, they should make that decision clear. If they want the city to obtain water from upland streams, they should vote for such a step.

If the majority favor new sources, the city government should stop trying to patch up the existing system at a cost of many millions and concentrate upon a new source that would give us the best possible water at the lowest possible price.

But let the people determine what should be done. They drink the water and pay the bills for it. They should decide what kind of water they will have.

WALLPACK BEND THE SOUGHT

Mayor Asks Right to Get City Priority on Area.

Mayor Samuel asked City Council yesterday for authorization to bring the city's right to the Wallpack Bend area as a future source of water supply for Philadelphia before the State.

Pre-emption, the Mayor said in a resolution to Council, will give Philadelphia a priority in case the ultimate decision of Council is to use the Wallpack Bend.

\$62,000 for Allentown

Washington, March 25—(AP)—The Federal Water Agency announced today it had advanced \$62,000 to Allentown, Pa., to finance plans for addition to its water supply. Estimated cost, \$1,500,000.

Philadelphia Water Department
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