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Vision, not just a view

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By Nancy Pope/A view from a Camden County Democrat

THE QUESTION: Should the county government consider limits or a moratorium on lakefront development?

Nah, I love seeing these beautiful hills blown to smithereens, all those trees erased from the landscape, and then all of those unnatural and architectural nightmares rising from the ruins. And darn it, those gnarled Ozarks hardwood trees just get in the way of the view, anyway.

But let's get serious. The population growth in Camden County is 34.8 percent. Residential and business construction more than doubled from 2000-2003 and it is expected to continue at this rate.

Operations Director Jim Sandberg of Table Rock Lake is trying to find a balance between growth and the natural appeal of that lake. He says, 'One of the comments we hear from the public is that they don't want to see Table Rock Lake become another Lake of the Ozarks.'

How sad for us that others don't want to become like us.

The descent of irresponsible new construction on our shores creates an impact upon the whole lake area. It creates the need for gravel, which has been extricated on the west side in great, ugly and garish strips that have damaged the homes and lake nearby and lessened the value of homes nearby.

The greed spawns developers who have no concern that their dynamiting has resulted in damage to nearby structures.

Clear-cutting of the forests increases erosion that flows into the lake and into the streams and creeks that feed the lake. It simultaneously creates an inhospitable environment for the animals and vegetation that are a part of our ecosystem.

The very things that once attracted people to the lake may soon be damaged and repelling. Previous residents who have returned to the lake to visit relatives report crying at the damage done.

What about that word, 'impact?'

The impact may not be felt for many years after the construction.

The county should charge a non-refundable impact fee on every new construction. New construction requires heavy equipment on county roads, which must then be repaired. New homes require water lines and eventually sewer services.

Increased population from these new condos and resorts and homes will place more demand and have more impact on law enforcement.

The builders can pay an impact fee that increases with proximity to the lake and diminishes as the construction moves outside the lake area.

Other lake areas have considered a moratorium until a long-range plan is developed that weighs the balance between public interests and private interests. Are we too afraid to confront the people who are making a dime off every inch of the lake? Do we think the developers are the 'Goose that laid the golden egg'?

Many of us consider that golden egg rotting unless there is more balance between growth and natural resources. And when everything has been sold and all lakefront property developed, then what?

It is time to create a 15-year plan that addresses our needs both economically and aesthetically. The three lake counties can create a citizens' panel that isn't weighed down by special interests and will also include teachers and farmers and housewives and businesspersons and fishermen.

It is even more important for our children that we address these concerns in an objective manner now.

When you visit other cities or areas that have become tourist havens, their governments have anticipated the damage that unmanaged growth can create.

They have built in green areas and open spaces. They design walking pathways and bicycle paths along their main thoroughfares and their scenic routes.

Joe Jaeger, who was instrumental in creating the toll bridge and in setting aside the 17,441 acres of our state park, had a vision of shared growth and natural environment.

But as other parts of the lake have been developed, has there been a parallel effort to set aside land for public use, such as swimming beaches and public docks and parks?

Living here requires vision, not just a view.

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