

A Major Recreation Project

The Cypress-Black Bayou Recreation and Water Conservation District, a monumental project that has been lovingly nursed along for almost two decades, is on the threshold of another milestone toward completion.

The Cypress Lake Reservoir presently contains 15 feet of water, and spring rains are expected to add another four feet, filling the artificially - created 3,000-acre lake for the first time.

The reservoir, used only sparingly to date by fishermen, will be thrown open this summer to water skiing and boating enthusiasts, swimmers and an expected phalanx of anglers.

Originators of the project, which got off the ground in 1958 when the Legislature created the district, at times grew weary and frustrated at the seemingly endless red tape. At the outset, the project moved at a snail's pace, primarily because years of planning were required before financing was sought.

When the planning stage had been conquered and the priorities set, the project passed a second notable hurdle — the establishment by former Gov. Jimmie Davis of the district's board of commissioners in 1963. Those original commissioners were R. C. Atkins, Bossier School Board; D. E. Burchett, Bossier Parish Police Jury; Clyde W. Fowler, City of Bossier City; W. H. Beene, Bossier Parish Levee Board; and J. A. Dunnam Jr., Town of Benton.

Appointment of the board of commissioners paved the way for concrete action. The talking stage was over, and time had come for strides forward in financing and construction.

The commissioners, who proved early that

they were dedicated to the task, introduced a \$2.5 million bond issue in 1966. Bossier Parish voters approved a two-mill ad valorem tax to repay the bonds and a ½-mill for operation and maintenance by a four to one margin.

The bond issue vote tally represented for the commissioners an overwhelming vote of confidence on the part of Bossierites. The pat on the back gave commissioners renewed dedication and they plodded on. In succeeding years, clearing work and construction phases of the project have been undertaken.

Outdoor enthusiasts will be able this summer to enjoy a sandy beach area, a T-shaped fishing pier designed for use by the handicapped, a picnic shelter, 357 picnic tables, restroom facilities and a boat launch area.

The project, of course, is far from being completed, but the light at the end of the tunnel can be clearly seen. Some 340 acres of recreational facilities around the lake are slated for completion in early 1977, including a marina, an added picnic shelter, nature trails, 80 camping sites and a unique nature interpretive center to be used primarily by the Bossier Parish school system. Too, work is progressing on the smaller 677 - acre Black Bayou project.

"We've come a long way," Donn G. Thompson, district executive director, said in February of 1974. "Soon, it will be the best recreation area in this part of the country." Thompson's words could have been said today. District officials are to be complimented for their role in bringing to this section of the state an outstanding recreation facility — one that will be enjoyed by generations of local area residents.

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