

# THE CASE FOR REINVESTING IN THE TWIN CANEY WATERSHED PROJECT

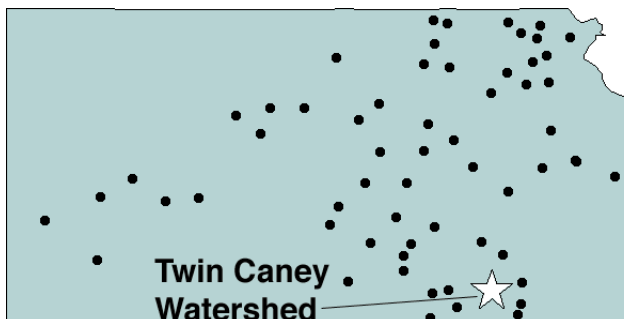


## THE SITUATION:

There are 30 floodwater retarding dams in the 'larger' Twin Caney watershed. Two of them are multi-purpose structures, containing extra pool size, depth and volume to provide water for recreation and water supply. This area, which is a large portion of Chautauqua County, really depends on these structures. This is a low income county with little industry. The only cropland is the narrow flood plains along the creeks. The uplands are primarily grazed native prairie. The existence of the flood control structures really reduces the risk and enhances the profitability of cropping these flood plains; it's their only local source of livestock feed.

Wells for domestic water supply are very expensive to drill due to bedrock geology and the poor quality of the water. The economy of the area (county) depends on a good, dependable quality water supply. Two of these structures provide water supply for the city of Sedan (the county seat) and some rural water districts. Local people state that the economy could be improved, if some of the existing dams could be enhanced to provide more rural water supply. Most of the watershed land use is native grass for grazing; therefore the runoff water is good quality.

The existing structures have been maintained by the local watershed and are in good condition; however, many are filling up with sediment as expected and their pools are being reduced. All principal spillway pipes are concrete and expected to last many more years; the watershed district is concerned whether they will have the necessary funds when the time comes for replacing the pipes.



*The Twin Caney Watershed is one of many watershed projects in Kansas. Dams in these projects have reduced flooding of homes, businesses, roads, and agricultural lands and have provided dependable water supplies for municipal and industrial use.*



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Size:** Covers 199,000 acres in Chautauqua, Elk and Montgomery Counties, Kansas.
- No. of dams:** 30 major dams, two of which are multi-purpose, and 27 miles of channel improvement.
- Project start:** Construction began in 1965.
- Project end:** Last dam built in 1970.
- Primary purpose:** Control floods, recreation and rural water supply.
- Population served:** 2,700 people in the local area plus 5,000 people involved in recreational activities.



## PARTNERS:

- Chautauqua, Elk and Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Middle Caney Watershed Joint District
- Twin Caney Watershed Joint District
- Quivira Council No. 198, Boy Scouts of America through operational agreement with the Twin Caney Watershed Joint District
- United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

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*"Watersheds have been essential in controlling flood waters in the county—people could not have lived below Quivara Lake."*

**Paul Jacobs**  
Retired park ranger

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*“Our cropland along the river doesn’t flood nearly as often as prior to the building of the watersheds. The watersheds are essential to our farming as a business.”*





**Herb Beason  
Farmer**

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 **AN INVESTMENT  
WORTH PROTECTING:**

Through Public Law 566, Congress invested \$3 million (\$12 million in current dollars) in construction of the Middle Caney and Twin Caney Watershed Projects. The local sponsors and landowners have spent almost \$1 million (\$3 million in current dollars) for land rights and other conservation practices. Local people are continuing to use their own tax funds to operate and maintain the projects.

The monetary benefits of the project have already exceeded the costs, and in addition have given benefits which impact the community significantly:

-  10 miles of road and 18 bridges are protected and lasting longer
-  Recreation is close to home. About 15,000 visitor days of recreation opportunities are made at the 30 dams each year for fishing and other recreation. Boy Scouts use one of the lakes for summer camps, weekend camps and training.
-  Wetlands have been created or enhanced which has helped migrating and nesting waterfowl.
-  About 40 miles of streams have better quality water.

Recreation is another very important aspect of the these structures. “City Lake,” near Sedan (also Sedan’s water supply) is managed for fish by State and local interests. Annually, they host fishing tournaments which draws fisherman from a six county area.

There is interest from out-of-county land buyers to purchase tracts, build homes, and establish residence in the county, while commuting to work 60 or more miles away. However, the limiting factor is water supply. If rural water districts supplied by watershed reservoir water could be enhanced, then county economic growth would come.

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*This image of Twin Caney Watershed shows the lake after a rain.*

 **NEW  
OPPORTUNITIES**

The three basic concerns of the local people, when the watershed was planned - consisting of flood damage reduction, recreation and rural water supply - are still significant concerns today. Effort should be spent to make sure these structures that answer the local concerns are preserved and enhanced for future years. The crops grown on these flood plains provide a significant link to the surrounding rangeland.

The lakes offer additional benefits as summer homes or permanent residences, additional recreation, hunting clubs, camping clubs, bird watchers and other uses.

 **STATEWIDE  
PERSPECTIVE**

Middle Caney and Twin Caney are two of the 66 watershed projects (includes both PL-534 and PL-566) with structures that have been completed or under construction. Forty-five of them are complete and twenty-one are under construction. The current USDA investment statewide through the watershed and related programs is about \$97 million. Land-rights-of-way and other local costs over the same time period has amounted to about \$50 million.

754 dams have been built as part of these projects. The first dams were built in the early 1950s. Most of the dams have been built with a design life of 50 years which means that the sediment pools are projected to fill with sediment over this number of years. Some dams are near this 50 year limitation and sediment pools are almost full.

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*“Absolutely the best thing that ever happened to Chautauqua County.”*

**Chester Reed  
Lifetime county resident**