

Try Making a Pitch – Kennedale, Texas

Kennedale is a city of close to 8,000 residents in the southern Fort Worth-Dallas metropolitan region of Texas. Village Creek is a stream that runs through the community, flowing into Lake Arlington – a water supply source for nearly 500,000 residents in the region.

Currently, the stream does not meet state and federal standards for water quality, with pollutants ranging from *E coli* to heavy metal contamination. The full extent of contamination is not known, however it is suspected to derive from a variety of sources, including nearby septic tanks and six large auto salvage yards that reside in a floodplain within Kennedale that leads to the stream. At this time, there are efforts underway to better assess the problem and how dramatically this pollution may be affecting Lake Arlington, an important water resource for the wider community. Kennedale has engaged the engineering department at the University of Texas at Arlington to conduct a sediment and water quality study to determine baseline conditions.

In addition to water quality issues, there are concerns about the flood vulnerability in the region. The city is working with the US Army Corps of Engineers on a Section 205 Flood Control study of the affected areas, and would also be interested in future flood vulnerabilities and how to minimize it. Three mobile home parks, eight residential structures, 30-40 businesses, and 6 salvage yards are located along Village Creek.

Finally, one of the salvage yards may contain illegal fill and be encroaching on the flood plain. To comply with the flood plain planning, it will need to be removed. If the city uses eminent domain, they will be liable for the cost of removing the fill but avoid a protracted legal battle with the owner of the salvage yard. If they sue and win the owner of the salvage yard for filling in without a permit, he is liable for the cost of removing the fill. The cost of removing the fill isn't clear – if the fill is contaminated it will be very expensive, if not, it is completely affordable. The owner of the salvage yard claims he had verbal permission to fill and won't let the city test the fill.

The long term goals for this region are to convert it to a parkland and recreation area. The mayor and city manager are committed to making this a highlight of the city and a welcoming area for visitors, since it is the first thing people see off the freeway. Instead of strip clubs and salvage yards, they imagine a bike-path and wetland.

