



Lake Granbury

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LAKE GRANBURY WILDLIFE**

The history of Lake Granbury and the DeCordova Bend Dam

BY EMILY NAVA
Staff Writer
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Lake Granbury is an iconic piece of the charming town of Granbury, attracting many in the community and those outside of town. The lake is located on the Brazos River off U.S. Highway 377 along with the DeCordova Bend Dam and is managed by the Brazos River Authority. But just how did this all come to be?

The reservoir that would become Lake Granbury first began as a six-dam master plan in 1935 by the founding members of the Brazos River Conservation and Reclamation District, known today as the Brazos River Authority. The plan was to have the middle of the Brazos River be turned into a 250-mile-long reservoir for flood control, water conservation for irrigation, soil conservation and reclamation as well as hydroelectric power production.

The DeCordova Bend Dam,

named after land agent and entrepreneur Jacob DeCordova, was mapped and surveyed by the Corps of Engineers in 1937.

It wasn't until 1961 that plans for the dam were announced to the public. More than 300 people across Hood County and surrounding areas listened as Brazos River Authority board member Walter Humphrey discussed plans for the dam, according to a Mar. 2, 1961, edition of the Hood County News Tablet.

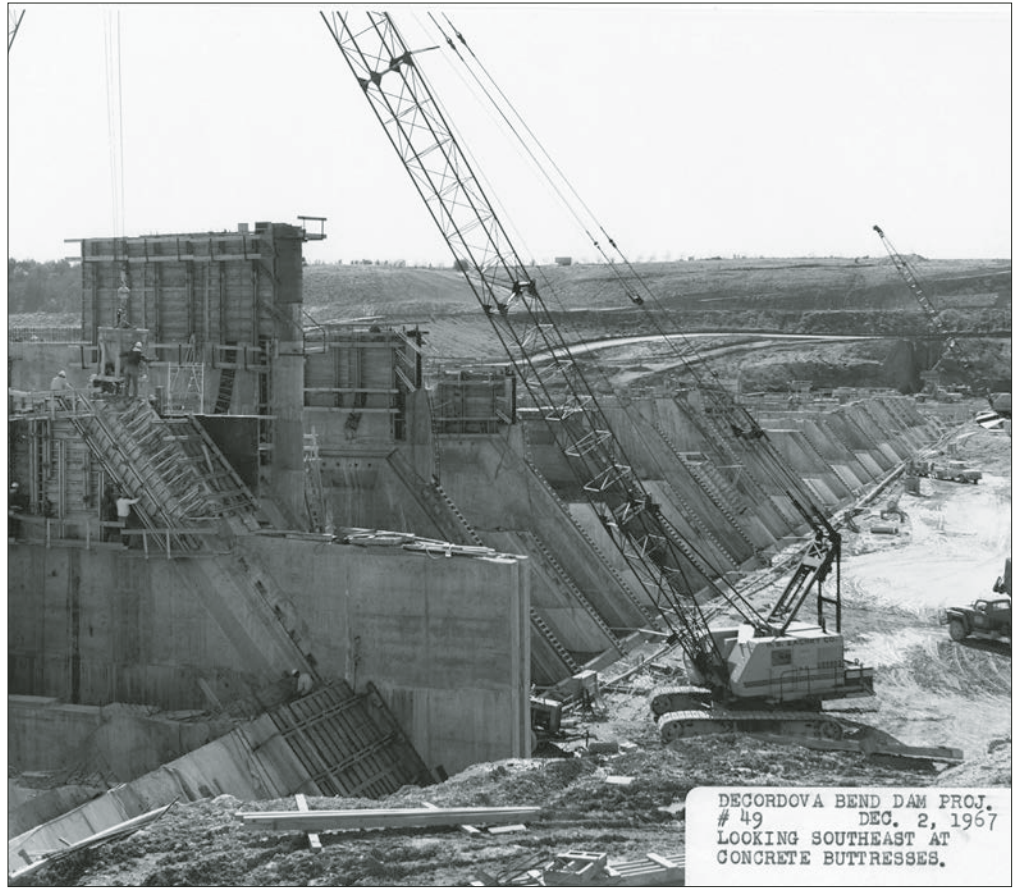
In 1966, the BRA broke ground on construction of Lake Granbury, which was completed in 1969 under a \$17 million contract. An official dedication ceremony in 1970 was attended by hundreds of people. The reservoir was built without using any tax dollars since it had been financed entirely from the sale of water by the BRA.

According to data from the BRA, Lake Granbury has a total capacity of 136,326 acre-feet and a surface area of 8,281.6 acres at the

conservation pool elevation. The lake is 35 miles long with a shoreline of 121 miles and a depth of 75 feet. The dam controls a drainage area of approximately 25,696 square miles. The dam is constructed with a combination of earth fill and Amrusen-type concrete and is 2,200 feet long, 84 feet high and has a 17-foot width at its top. The dam controls a drainage area of 25,679 miles.

The groundbreaking for Lake Granbury led to a flood of development across Hood County. In 1970, Hood County saw a boom in population.

Today, there are more than 3,300 residential boat docks and over 25 commercial boat docks along Lake Granbury. The reservoir has five public access areas for picnicking and fishing, including four parks offering primitive camping sites. The lake is a sought-after source of entertainment for both community members as well as tourists from all over.



The Decordova Bend Dam under construction (above) and at completion (below) in 1969.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRAZOS RIVER AUTHORITY




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Study of Lake Granbury's wildlife and ecosystem



PHOTOS BY LAYTH TAYLOR | HOOD COUNTY NEWS

A mallard swims along the surface of Lake Granbury. The lake hosts many types of birds throughout the year.

Staff Reports

There are many different creatures both on land and in the water within Lake Granbury's plentiful ecosystem, in particular, within the area of the watershed located within the Osage Plains section of the Central Lowlands physiographic province.

The Brazos River Authority studied the ecology within the lake and found the watershed reflects a history of negative disturbances, including improper grazing procedures, soil erosion, lowered water tables in some areas, declining native grasslands and altered river ecosystems. The historic tall and mid-grass prairies have become a mesquite short grass savanna.

Animals native to the area include white-tailed deer, beaver, bobcat, coyote, fox, skunk, raccoon, squirrel, turkey and a diverse array of small mammals and birds. In addition, feral hog populations in the area are believed to be significant and on the rise.

All rivers and streams in the Lake Granbury watershed are typical prairie stream ecosystems characterized by extreme fluctuations in water level. The native fish fauna has adapted to the variable flow regimes and extremes.

Lake Granbury supports fish species not typical of streams, including common carp, gizzard shad, warmouth,

bluegill sunfish, longear sunfish, largemouth bass, white bass, spotted bass, striped bass, white crappie, flathead catfish and walleye.

The watershed, in addition to the remainder of the Cross Timbers, is important to migratory and winter waterfowl. During the migratory season, ducks and coots are distributed throughout the watershed wherever there are ponds or natural wetlands. Many species of migrating shorebirds, raptors, Neotropical songbirds and other birds stopover in the watershed to feed and rest.

At least 30 species of amphibians, reptiles and mammals are known to inhabit the watershed. Many of these species are aquatic or semi-aquatic. All toads require aquatic habitats to reproduce. A number of snakes known in the watershed are restricted to riparian habitats, including the copperhead, the western ribbon snake, the eastern coral snake and the Brazos water snake.

The golden-cheeked warbler is currently on the federal list of endangered species and its known range includes the Lake Granbury watershed. The most significant threat to the existence of the warbler is the loss and fragmentation of habitat due to clearing of oak-juniper woodlands and brood parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds. The golden-cheeked warbler breeds exclusively in

Texas, are present from early March to late August and winters from southern Mexico to Nicaragua.

The Brazos water snake is mostly aquatic, non-venomous and found only in north central Texas along the Brazos River system. Due to its limited range, it is considered to be a threatened species in the state of Texas. An adult snake can range from 16-32 inches in length. Its dorsal color ranges from brown to olive with two longitudinal rows of brown spots on each side of its body that create the look of stripes, while the ventral surface is pink to orange with one row of dark spots on each side of the belly.

The original vegetation was tallgrass prairie in the upland areas and elm, pecan and hackberry in riparian areas, where deeper soils have developed in floodplain deposits or where the underlying clays have been exposed by limestone erosion. The invasive species Ashe juniper and, to a lesser extent, honey mesquite have increased since settlement. Cross Timbers grasses include big bluestem, yellow Indiangrass, little bluestem, hairy grama, Texas winter grass, sideoats grama and Texas cup grass. Present land uses include grazing on ridges with shallow soils and farming of corn, grain sorghum and wheat on the deeper soils on the flats.



A heron sits in a tree perched above the water of Lake Granbury.

Business booms in decades since dam built

BY EDEN DUNCAN GILBREATH

Special to the Hood County News
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No one would argue that when DeCordova Bend Dam was built it changed more than the physical landscape of Hood County. The flooding of the land that would become Lake Granbury, which was previously a wide spot in the Brazos River, fundamentally changed the course of the county.

Residents whose families have lived in Hood County for generations can tell you the Granbury they always knew is barely recognizable today. What was once a sleepy little town with barely surviving commerce has become a booming town of industry and retail splendor, and a hub to all the surrounding towns.

Early residents bemoan the loss of what once was; a town where families knew each other for generations. Before the lake and the push to revitalize the downtown square, the businesses in Granbury relied on their friends and neighbors to stay afloat. The square once had empty spots as only a few businesses managed to keep their doors open.

Granbury has boomed for a variety of factors, the lake being key to that growth. But not the lake alone — the close proximity to the metroplex lured tourists to the historic downtown as it was restored to its former glory, and the history of the county in general was a support to this growth. All these things worked synergistically to make Granbury what it is today.

Some businesses were not able to weather the storms of change as the demographics in Granbury began to change. No longer was every business known as a neighbor, and small-town businesses struggled to keep their place among franchises and chains.

The lake did bring traffic to Granbury, and with the traffic came money. Sometimes that money came from people just passing through, but some money also came to stay as developments sprung up and businesses began to flourish.

Marinas, fishing stores, general purpose stores carrying bait and tackle, restaurants and multiple types of lake-side living became part of the business landscape.

Before long, Granbury boasted the sort of stores residents used to travel to Fort Worth to frequent. Stores like Ross, Marshall's, Michael's, Rack Room and James Avery were added to the ranks of big box giant Walmart, who has also carried sporting goods at a handy location. Home Goods and Ulta remain; Tuesday Morning, Famous Footwear and CiCi's Pizza did not fare as well.

The businesses around the square began changing as much as the landscape on U.S. Highway 377. When the square was revitalized decades ago, families bought the spots around the square that then held mostly tourist type items. Many of the visitors to Granbury were retirees who arrived on buses.

In recent years, some business owners who held those spots for decades retired and sold their property. The demographics of Granbury began to change as more young families moved to the area. Now many of the downtown spots cater to nightlife after receiving licenses to sell alcohol.

The downtown businesses now include art galleries, bars, upscale clothing boutiques, and specialty and niche stores. The evenings buzz with activity many nights each week on the square, which used to be quiet after 5 p.m.

Things have changed so much in the past several decades, and the growth shows no signs of slowing down.



PHOTO BY LAYTH TAYLOR | HOOD COUNTY NEWS

Businesses such as Mesquite Pit on E. Pearl St. provide slips for lake going customers to dock their boats while dining.



Brazos River Authority's role on Lake Granbury

BY ASHLEY TERRY
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The Brazos River Authority (BRA) is an integral part of Lake Granbury's sustainability, but what exactly does that mean? And what does the BRA do?

The mission of the BRA is to develop, manage and protect the water resources of the Brazos River basin, according to brazos.org. The BRA was created by the Texas Legislature in 1929 and was the first state agency in the United States created specifically for the purpose of developing and managing the water resources of an entire river basin.

DeCordova Bend Dam and Lake Granbury were constructed by the Brazos River Authority and are maintained and operated by the BRA as a source of water supply.

According to the BRA website, the project was authorized through a permit issued by the state of Texas in 1964. Construction began in December 1966 and was completed by September 1969. The project provides 136,326 acre-feet of storage capacity for conservation of flood and storm waters to meet requirements of municipalities, industries, agriculture and mining.

The BRA water supply system includes 11 reservoirs scattered across the 42,000-square-mile river basin. Three of the man-made lakes — Lake Granbury, Possum Kingdom and Lake Limestone — were built for water supply, meaning when full, the lake level is near the top of each dam.

While the three man-made lakes are owned and operated by the BRA, the other eight are owned and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, a fourth reservoir, Allens Creek, is a state-

permitted water storage reservoir planned for construction in the lower portion of the Brazos basin.

"The idea behind a water supply reservoir is to capture and store water during wet times for use during periods of drought when rainfall and river flows are down," Charlie Shugart, BRA assistant public information officer told the Hood County News. "Though many consider the reservoir located near their home as belonging to their city, county or region, the water stored in the 11 reservoirs permitted to the Brazos River Authority function as a 'system' or a series of linked storage facilities with the capability of supplying water both locally and to other areas within the system via release into a river, tributary or in some cases via pipeline. This includes Lake Granbury."

To ensure the dam's integrity, Shugart said, monthly and annual inspections, along with comprehensive five-year inspections are conducted regularly, as there are a variety of different requirements

BRA hydrologists, reservoir operations and emergency management, to prevent overtopping of Lake Granbury's and DeCordova Bend Dam's gates while minimizing downstream impacts where possible."

Although there are many requirements to maintaining the dam, there are also more tasks at hand than managing the water resource. Shugart said lake rangers are available daily to ensure everyone has a safe trip home after enjoying the water. She added the rangers also provide help to those in need and keep our lake and dam safe.

Today, the BRA's staff of more than 250 develop and distribute water supplies, provide water and wastewater treatment, monitor water quality, and pursue water conservation through public education programs, according to brazos.org.

"We protect the dam and the residents enjoying recreational opportunities on the water," Shugart said. "We manage inflows into the reservoir to keep our lake full during the rainy season, so water is available during the time of most need."

Shugart said while managing a water supply system as large and climatologically diverse as the BRA is quite a feat, the real test comes when there's a drought and water is scarce.

"Historically low lake levels throughout the basin during the recent drought make efficiently and resourcefully managing Lake Granbury and the other 10 reservoirs throughout the basin imperative," she said.

Shugart said the BRA is also actively working to develop new water sources throughout the Brazos River basin to meet the needs of the state's growing population, which will help all 11 of the lakes in the BRA water supply system — including Lake Granbury.

"Lake Granbury and the DeCordova Bend Dam are a treasure and vital resource to so many," Shugart added.

While many are familiar with the BRA as a whole, there are also a few misconceptions about the BRA among Granbury residents — like the idea that Lake Granbury was built with tax dollars. Shugart stressed that this is completely false.

"The reservoir was built entirely without the use of tax dollars," she said. "Instead, the BRA contracted with TXU Electric Company, now Reliant, for the purchase of cooling water for steam electric power plants. Later, in the 1980s, the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant near Glen Rose became a major user. And when it comes to operations — except for occasional governmental grants to aid in the cost of specific projects — the BRA is funded entirely through the sale of water and the management of water and wastewater services."

Another popular misconception is that Lake Granbury's primary purpose is recreation. In fact, the DeCordova Bend Dam and Lake Granbury were constructed and operated by the BRA as a source of water supply.

"As a water supply reservoir, Lake Granbury can store 129,011 acre-feet water (325,851 gallons = one acre-foot) for municipal, industrial, agricultural and mining use," Shugart said. "And who uses that water? The city of Granbury is the second largest user of the reservoir's water, behind the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant, and the lake is the water supply for many others. Recreational opportunities then, like fishing, boating and



swimming, are a secondary benefit to having the lake enjoyed by residents and visitors to the area."

Water plays an integral part of everyday life, like for drinking, brushing our teeth and showering. Shugart said the BRA — through Lake Granbury — provides that and more to Granbury residents.

"In 2023, city of Granbury residents used 4,209-acre feet of water from the reservoir. That is a lot of water," she said.

The BRA also provides recreational opportunities to the community — from fishing spots to watercraft. Four parks are also available for the public to use, and they feature boat ramps, fishing piers, camping and picnic areas.

Shugart said at the Lake Granbury office, they believe in actively engaging with the community and supporting local events.

"Our dedicated staff eagerly participates in various community gatherings, including school programs, health fairs and safety initiatives, working closely to promote drowning prevention education and water safety," she said.

"We also once a year host an event at the lake where we give away hundreds of life jackets to kids. Throughout the year, we speak when invited to local community groups as we take pride in being an accessible resource for the community."

The BRA provides a water resource for thousands of homes and businesses — and it will only continue to grow.

For more information about the BRA, visit brazos.org online.


"The idea behind a water supply reservoir is to capture and store water during wet times for use during periods of drought when rainfall and river flows are down."

CHARLIE SHUGART


BRA Assistant Public Information Officer

when it comes to managing and operating Lake Granbury.

"Our team of highly skilled hydrologists meticulously monitor the lake's water level, inflows, evaporation rates and water usage daily," she said. "Passing flood flows takes a very precise and delicate balance on the part of



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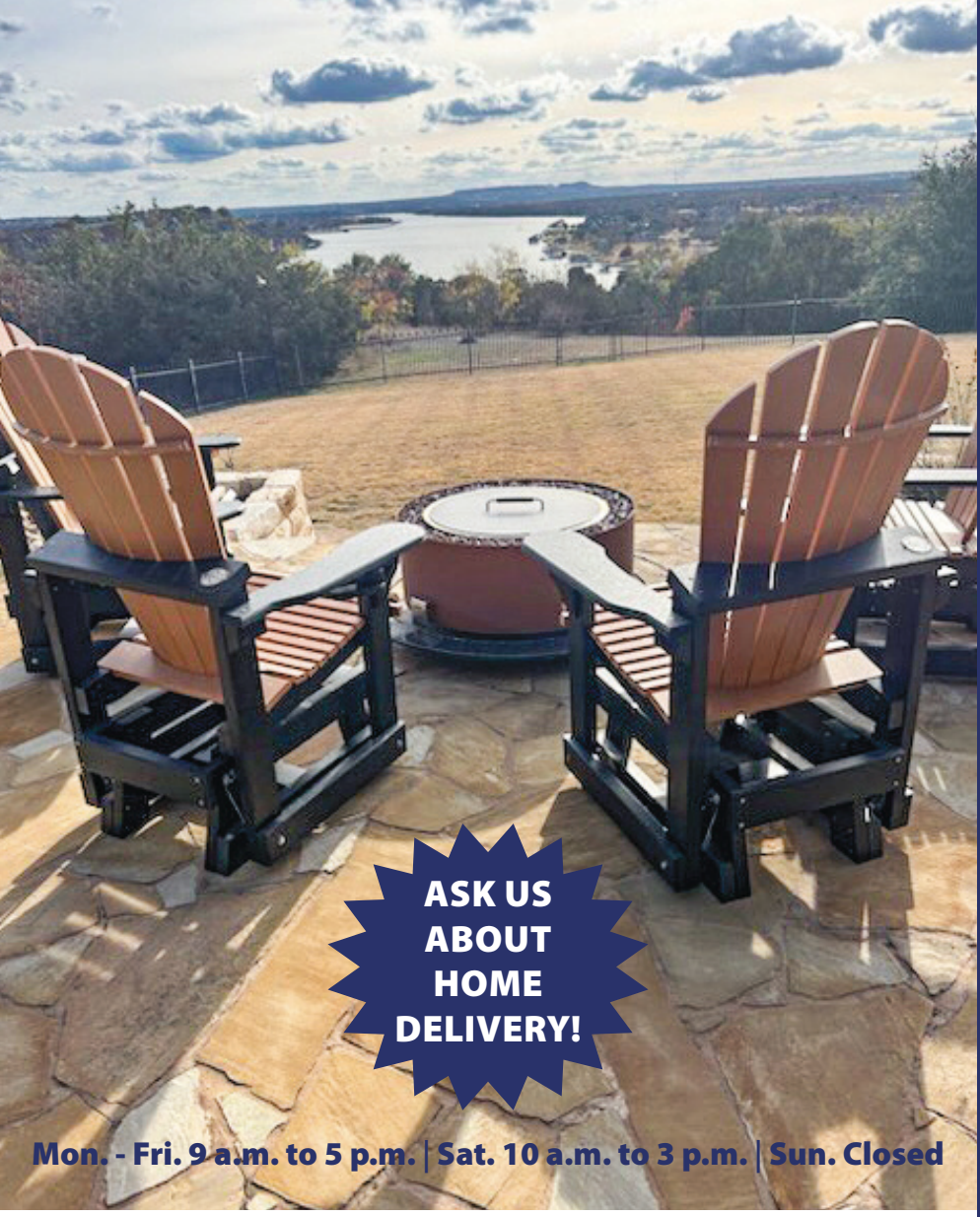
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Economic impact of Lake Granbury

BY EMILY NAVA
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The quaint town of Granbury attracts many residents from all over the state for many reasons, but one of its crown jewels is Lake Granbury.

After Lake Granbury and the DeCordova Dam were finished in 1969, Granbury saw a boom in population. According to the Texas State Historical Association, between 1970 and 1980, Hood County ranked sixth among United States counties for the highest growth rate.

In 1970, Hood County had 192 retail establishments; by 1980, that number was 777. The population grew from 5,443 people in 1960 to 17,714 in 1980.

With the lake, the town was able to create a market for tourism and community involvement and capitalize on it. From boat, kayak, paddle boat and bicycle rentals, to lakeside apartments, houses and restaurants, the lake has become a hotspot for economic development and economic strides.

Properties built from 2000 to 2012 with the highest taxable values directly correlated to water adjacent homes, follow by lake related homes, and homes with a water view according to a study published by Iris Walker in 2013. The study also found that lake-related lodging facilities generate approximately 44.2% of taxable hotel receipts in

Hood County. The study also found that lake-related property values could increase between \$269.8 million and \$652.4 million over the next 30 years, meaning an additional property tax revenue between \$0.8 million and \$1.9 million dollars for Hood County.

The boom of the lake has led to boat docks being built, and boat repair shops soon followed. In 2020, more than 3,300 residential boat docks and 25 commercial docks were located on Lake Granbury, according to the Brazos River Authority.

In 2021, a 48-acre luxury development known as Lakeview Landing was approved by the Granbury City Council that will include residential, retail, office and restaurant space with waterfront dining. Single family homes are also being planned there with some being built on an island. This development is estimated to serve not only 1,000 residents but also to attract others from inside and outside the community to enjoy the planned trails, boardwalk and park.

From 2020 to 2022, the City of Granbury's population grew by 1,433 people, a rate of 13.1%. Hood County's population grew to 65,209 during that time and is expected to grow to 68,160 by 2026. With that kind of expected growth, development and expansion will follow, making Lake Granbury a continental hotspot for businesses.



The historic Granbury Courthouse as seen from the waters of Lake Granbury.

LAYTH TAYLOR | HOOD COUNTY NEWS

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DeCordova Bend Dam



COURTESY OF BRAZOS RIVER AUTHORITY

The Brazos River Authority began construction of the DeCordova Bend Dam at Lake Granbury in December 1966, completing the water supply reservoir by September 1969.

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Lake Granbury - a lake for all seasons

BY EDEN DUNCAN GILBREATH

Special to the Hood County News eden@hcnews.com

A significant reason many choose to settle in Granbury is the draw of the local lake. Some of these lake lovers became residents where they can both live and work. For other residents a commute to the metroplex for work allows them quick access to the lake and the ability to take advantage of the slower pace of a small town. And for those whose families trace their heritage in Hood County back generations they separate time by the phrases "before the lake" and "after the lake." meaning after the DeCordova dam made a lake out of a section of river.

Activities around Lake Granbury abound throughout the seasons. Though spring and summer bring the most activity, now with the advent of Granbury Convention and Visitors Bureau's Winter Guest program, added fun continues on the coldest of days. This is most clearly expressed in the Goosebump Jump in January when costume-clad attendants plunge into the icy lake to the cheers of the audience.

Lake sporting is a top priority to residents and visitors alike especially in the warmer months. The 33.5 miles of lake provide vast lengths for water sports. The lake boasts five boat ramps and two fishing piers. Those enjoying boating, kayaking, and watercraft find plenty of room to roam.

The 103 miles of shore-

line provide ample opportunity to find good coves for fishing, and multiple fishing guides in the area can provide guidance to even a rank beginner.

Four easily accessible campsites exist around Lake Granbury for anyone wanting to star-gaze and sleep in the night air - perfect stay-cation awaits

Lake Granbury's city beach provides a bastion of fun all in one spot. Covered picnic tables and a pergola dot the beach allowing a shaded place to enjoy a meal or seek respite from the summer sun.

The splash pad at the city beach delights beach goers both young and young at heart. There is no fee to enter the beach and the splash pad is free as well. Bathrooms are handily located directly on the sand.

If you forgot your picnic lunch when visiting the city beach you can grab a bite at the Tiki hut right on site and it won't set you back much. Tubes, bikes, stand-up paddle boards and kayaks are available to rent.

Evenings are nice on the beach almost any time of year. A beach chair provides a relaxing spot from which to enjoy the breeze as the sun sets. The boardwalk is a lovely backdrop and a practical tool for traversing from the parking lot to the downtown area.

Several local restaurants provide lakeside dining with diverse fare. A quaint date or evening out with friends seems more magical with the lapping of water.

Fireworks over the lake for Granbury's Hometown fourth of July Celebration

bring families from all over the region. The Lake Granbury lighted boat parade is also a fun event that families attend yearly. The reflection of the lights in the water make the summer evenings especially memorable.

Lake conditions may be checked on the lake-cam found on the Lake Granbury Convention and Visitors Bureau site at visitgranbury.com/things-to-do/lake-cam. The Brazos River Authority has information on waterfowl hunting on Lake Granbury. The Hood County News is a good source for what fish are biting and where best to find them. Any further questions can be answered at Granbury's Convention and Visitors Bureau at 817-573-5548.



PHOTO BY LAYTH TAYLOR | HOOD COUNTY NEWS

Lake Granbury offers the opportunity to find good coves for fishing, and multiple fishing guides in the area can provide guidance to even a rank beginner.



COURTESY PHOTO

Lake goers enjoy boating and kayaking, with plenty of room to roam.

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	March 3rd, 2024 7:00pm Jimmy Fortune performed with the legendary Statler Brothers
	March 8th, 2024 7:30pm William Lee Martin
	March 9th, 2024 7:00pm IN HALEN A Van Halen Tribute
	March 15th, 2024 Cody Canada
	March 16th, 2024 7:00pm Two Dudes: A Night of Rock and Soul Michael Hix + One

Livin' lakeside

The draw of Lake Granbury on homebuyers

BY ASHLEY TERRY
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For decades, Lake Granbury has served as a huge draw for potential homebuyers who desire to live on the lake.

But as Granbury continues to grow, the number of new lakeside properties has started to diminish due to the lack of available land.

"Granbury is exploding with people and the roads aren't big enough to handle them all now," Pam Knieper, broker/owner of Knieper Real Estate and waterfront expert told the HCN. "We're just about out of land for building waterfront properties. There's a few areas left, and we got one area working with a developer right now that's trying to put in some townhouses on the lake, but pretty much if you want to move to Granbury and live on the lake, you gotta buy something that's existing already."

Additionally, as lakefront living is such a huge draw to Granbury residents, Knieper explained how most people move here in their late 50s and choose to stay here until they pass away or are forced to move to another residence.

"A lot of people come out here to retire," she explained. "This is a retirement community. A lot of them come a little early and just commute back to Fort Worth and Dallas to work until they do retire, but one of their main reasons to come out here is to have a lake home; that's why we don't have a big turnover on lakefront properties either."

With the exception of the drought that took place in 2008, property values for lakefront homes have con-

tinued to soar within the last 10 years.

"The property values, of course, have gone way up, no doubt about that over the years," Knieper said. "We had the drought in 2008 and then there was also the recession at the same time, so it was a bad time on Lake Granbury. But at that time the prices on the main body waterfront had gotten up to almost \$300 a foot to have a nice house on the lake, and then after the drought, property value dropped way down, and we basically had to start back over building the prices back up."

According to Knieper, main body waterfront prices on Lake Granbury have risen from an average of less than \$150 per square foot to over \$350 per square foot.

"The main body of the lake is like the main shoreline that makes the riverbed," Knieper explained. "The main body is the place where the property values went up the highest. The prices are back up on the main body over \$400 a foot for some places, which is really good, but there's a shortage of inventory. There's also close to 500 re-altors in Granbury now and then with a big shortage on homes to sell, the competition in the real estate market is pretty tough."

In 2022, there were 176 lakefront homes sold in Hood County with an average sale price of \$711,804 and \$298 average per square foot.

In 2023, 198 lakefront homes were sold in Hood County with an average sale price of \$670,978 and \$309 average per square foot.

To date in 2024, Knieper said there have been 11 lakefront homes sold ranging in price from a low

of \$80,000 to a high of \$1,950,000.

There are currently 45 homes on Lake Granbury listed for sale in the North Texas Real Estate Information System. They range in price from \$199,900 to \$3,750,000 with square foot prices averaging \$356. There are an additional 13 homes currently under contract.

"A lot of times I end up taking people out in my boat to show them the (property) from the lake side, especially if they're interested in waterfront," Knieper said. "We have what's called 'walk out water,' and that actually means you don't have to walk down a big cliff to get to the water; it's just right outside your back door. But lots of people don't really care about walking down to the water. They like the views better."

As a waterfront expert for the past 26 years herself, Knieper said it was always a dream of hers to live on the lake. She said she and her husband fell in love with Granbury's small-town community, its dining, entertainment, and shopping — but the lake was where it hit home.

"We eventually got here, and Granbury is right on the edge of the hills, so it didn't look like Texas," she said. "I think there's a lot of people who do fall in love with the terrain here, because we get the rolling hills, the rivers and valleys, and all the other things that our town has to offer."

While there may not be as many new lakefront properties for sale in the coming years, one thing is for sure — Lake Granbury will always be a huge draw for current and future residents.

Knieper Realty Inc.



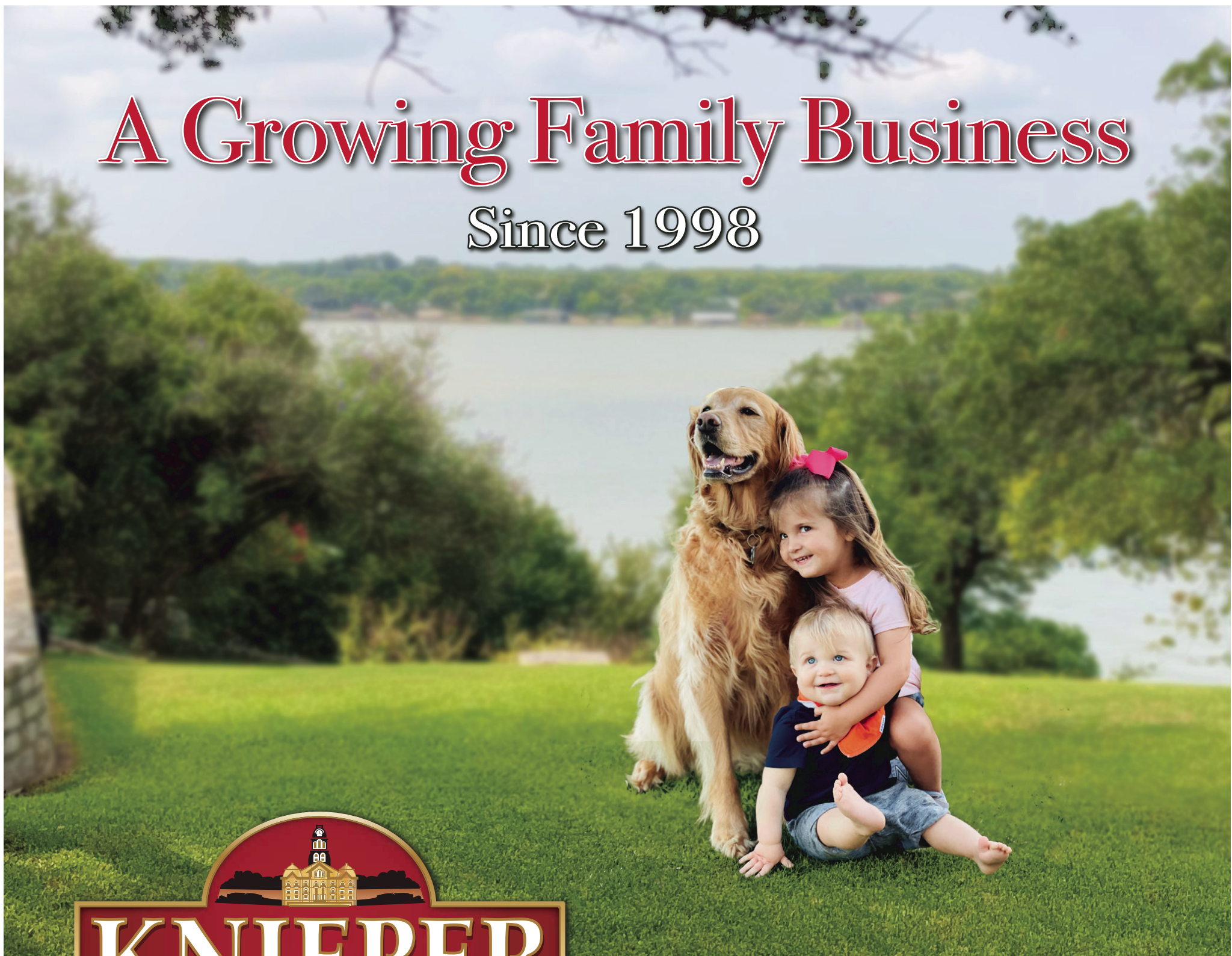
COURTESY PHOTO

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