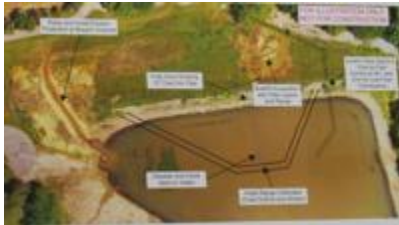


Rep. Comer and Marion, Ky., leaders discuss Crittenden-Livingston Water District expansion

- Alexa Black
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MARION, Ky. — It has been two years since the Marion water crisis started, which stemmed from the deterioration of Lake George. In 2022, emergency measures were taken to drain Lake George after a levee failure, which was the primary source of water for the city's residents.

Since then, through multiple efforts and coordination with surrounding counties, as well as state officials, there have been only temporary solutions to the problem.



U.S. Rep. James Comer visited Marion on Tuesday, alongside multiple city and county officials at Farmers Bank to discuss implementing plans moving forward, which would resolve the water crisis in its entirety.

As announced in May 2024, the Crittenden-Livingston Water District was awarded funding for an expansion, so that they could also serve Marion. Though CLWD currently serves both Crittenden and Livingston County, it cannot serve the city of Marion as well at its current capacity. The water crisis has been a top priority for county leaders since 2022, so having a tangible solution well within reach has given citizens and city officials hope.



CLWD's Water Consultant Tim Thomas explained that in 2022, the state was assisting in hauling water to the local plant, which has a considerably smaller reservoir. By coordinating with

Kentucky Emergency Management, Marion was able to maintain the water supply, though rationing and with severe restrictions. However, in 2023, they were able to temporarily cap and allow the dam at Lake George to hold water for the city, but only about one-third of its capacity. This allowed the city access to water through the summers of 2023 and 2024, but it still remains a compromised dam.



“There are risks that it would fail, even at that capacity,” Thomas said. “However, it has been stabilized with help from Kentucky Emergency Management, and the state with the coffer dam. But, Marion has to have a long-term solution. Rebuilding the dam is too expensive of a proposition and it is reaching its life expectancy. The community leaders, with engineering assistants have decided the solution is tying into CLWD.”

Comer moved to enact plans of CLWD's expansion, which would double the current plant's capacity. He approved moving forward with the proposed plan and also praised the efforts of surrounding counties for their swift action in aiding Marion during their crisis.

“Everybody worked very well between city and county when that happened,” Comer said. “The local industry stuck with everybody. You have some pretty big customers here in town who use a lot of water. I am glad the community stuck together in fixing the problem — and a bad problem, too.”

Plans for CLWD's plans are currently in early stages of tailoring the design and getting the required approval, which is expected to take an estimate six to eight months. Once approved, it will take approximately 18 months, or up to two to three years to fully complete.

“Our hope is that how we resolve this will be a textbook case,” Marion Mayor D’Anna Browning said. “We are not the only small city in this situation, or can be. Our goal is how to be the benchmark on how to do this the right way.”

Judge Executive Perry Newcom said that leaders are applying for a low interest loan, a forgivable loan, as well as a grant for funding of Phase 2 of the expansion. They currently have funding to get through Phase 2, and he has hope they will acquire funding for Phase 3, which concerns distribution.

Although this initiative has been a step in the right direction, Comer, Browning, Newcom, and CLWD Water Consultant Tim Thomas, among others present, acknowledged that it may be a slow process.