



LETTERS NEEDED TO SUPPORT NECHES RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released an environmental assessment for public review, prior to establishing **the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge** on the lovely stretch of the Upper Neches River in Anderson and Cherokee Counties. ***The refuge needs YOUR support!***

The **25,000 acres** proposed for inclusion within the refuge boundary contains some of the best remaining and least disturbed bottomland hardwood forest habitat left in Texas, rated by USFWS as “**Priority 1**”. If given final approval, the **Neches River National Wildlife Refuge** will protect vital habitat for **wildlife, waterfowl, and migratory songbirds**, will provide wonderful **hunting and other outdoor recreational** opportunities for the public, and will serve as an **economic boon** to surrounding communities. The 540 National Wildlife Refuges in the lower 48 states fueled more than \$809 million in sales. With bird watching and canoeing the top two nature activities in the state, **East Texas has much to gain** from establishing the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge.

Water developers are trying to block final approval of the Refuge, to keep the site free for **Fastrill Reservoir**, which **would drown most of the 25,000 acres proposed for the refuge**. Fastrill is **not needed for water supply**. The City of Dallas recently listed it in the City’s Long-Range Water Supply Plan as a potential source of water supply for 2045, but there is **enough water available from existing reservoirs** to way more than meet Dallas’ water demands projected as far out as 2060.

Key points: Unlike the situation if a reservoir is built, the Fish and Wildlife Service **will not exercise land condemnation** to establish the refuge. The Service will purchase lands from **willing sellers only**. For lands purchased within the refuge boundary, the Service will make **Refuge Revenue Sharing payments** to each county to replace the tax revenues the counties are currently receiving in property taxes. The Service will provide **financial assistance to relocate** those landowners who choose to sell their lands for the refuge.

Once home to the ivory-billed woodpecker, recently found not to be extinct, the Upper Neches is prime habitat for **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s** project considering **reintroduction of the endangered black bear in Texas**. The refuge site is in the **debris field of the wreckage of the space shuttle Columbia** and has been **proposed as a memorial** to this national tragedy. Citizen groups have launched **The Neches River Protection Initiative**, to seek designation of parts of the Neches as a **National Scenic River**.

Building a reservoir on the site, however, would **impact the very-water-dependent Big Thicket National Preserve, two national forest wilderness areas, a state wildlife management area, and the Texas State Historical Railroad**.

SEND USFWS A LETTER TODAY EXPRESSING YOUR SUPPORT FOR NECHES RIVER REFUGE ALTERNATIVE “B”, WHICH WOULD PROTECT UP TO 25,281 ACRES!!

By May 31, send to: Tom Baca, USFWS, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103 or tom_baca@fws.gov

Copies to: The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510
The Honorable John Cornyn, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510
The Honorable Louie Gohmert, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515
The Honorable Jeb Hensarling, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515
The Honorable Todd Staples, Texas Senate, P.O. Box 12068, Austin, Texas 78711

**Contact: Texas Committee on Natural Resources -- Janice Bezanson, 512-327-4119, bezanson@texas.net
Neches River Protection Initiative – Gina Donovan, 936-465-0594, savetheneches@austin.rr.com**

Neches River Photo by Mark Bush