
Caddo watershed goals focus of Tuesday meeting

By Steve Bandy, News Messenger, Saturday, September 27, 2008

JEFFERSON — Decisions could be made Tuesday by stakeholders attending the Caddo Lake Watershed Protection Plan meeting regarding nutrient inflows to the lake, increased monitoring and other water quality goals.

The meeting, hosted by the Northeast Texas Municipal Water District and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, will begin at 1 p.m. in the Jeffersonian Institute, 120 E. Austin St. Originally scheduled for Sept. 16 and postponed in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, the meeting is open to the public.

A key presentation at this meeting will be made by Dr. David Harkins of Espey Consulting. Harkins will report the findings of a recent comprehensive evaluation of water quality and pollution in the Caddo Lake watershed. The study examined the presence of nutrient loads, bacteria, acid rain conditions and other factors affecting water quality in the lake.

Also, reporting on invasive vegetation management will be Chairman Ken Shaw and board member Robert Speight, representing the Cypress Valley Navigation District. CVND currently is directing control efforts for giant salvinia and water hyacinth on the Texas side of Caddo Lake.

"This is one of the most important stakeholder meetings we will have because we are helping TCEQ set goals for the ongoing water quality process for Caddo Lake and the larger watershed for the next two years," said Sam Canup, mayor of Uncertain. "Our hospitality and tourism industry is dependent upon clean, safe water flowing through the lake."

Caddo Lake Institute president Rick Lowerre also will provide an update on work to protect environmental flows. CLI and NETMWD have been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey to develop a "flows recipe" that would protect water needed for fish, wildlife, recreation and other instream needs without interfering with the needs for drinking water and other uses of water in the watershed.

There also will be a presentation on the effectiveness of Texas Forestry Best Management Practices and how they relate to nutrient and pollution inputs throughout the Caddo Lake watershed.

Stakeholders who attend the meeting will be asked to decide such things as whether to seek reductions in nutrients flowing into the lake, to increase monitoring and whether future efforts should be refocused on specific segments of the lake.

"This is a bottoms-up process," said Lowerre. "These stakeholder meetings have been well-attended in the past and the information that is presented is science-based and objective. Each person attending definitely will have a say in what we will all be working to achieve at Caddo Lake during the next two years."

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