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## Editorial: Caddo Lake deserves better

Threats to the health of Caddo Lake area just keep on coming. This time the threat comes from raw sewage that spills out near Oil City homes and roadways and has the potential to adversely affect swimmers, anglers, boaters and the venerable lake itself.

This is no way to treat a place that's been called "the most beautiful lake in America" and that is designated as a wetland of international importance.

It's heartbreaking to think of the foul pollution that could be slipping into that primordial scene of natural beauty, peace and serenity represented by shimmering waters, bald cypress trees, Spanish moss and myriad wildlife.

There are differing opinions as to whether raw sewage is actually making its way into Caddo Lake, but a number of residents report years of problems, punctuated by frustrations over attempts to get town authorities to provide a proper remedy for the situation.

Residents now are armed with photos and videos showing disgusting sewage flowing toward the lake from an overflow line and drainage ditch that fill when the town sewer lift station malfunctions. Town officials acknowledge a few accidental discharges of untreated sewage water but contend the sewage never reached the lake's shores.

It is clear the issue has reached a boiling point that hopefully will bring clarity and action. Oil City Mayor Charles Dickey must work immediately to eliminate any accidents and even any more overflows. He must work promptly to assure residents that serious and long-term attention will be devoted to solve the problem. The issue is a valid citizen concern that should be addressed at the earliest possible moment.

The huge Chinese-dragon-shaped Caddo Lake that straddles Texas and Louisiana some 17 miles north of Shreveport, has had more than its share of threats over the years. Caddo Indian legend has it that the lake was formed some 200 years ago following a massive earthquake, while other lore states the lake built up behind the Red River log jam. Once the logs were cleared, the lake threatened to drain away, but the discovery of oil in the area stabilized the lake via a dam and then the first offshore drilling in the world.

Later there were threats of excessive mercury levels, contamination due to military and industrial issues, and habitat change from intensive forest harvesting for timber mill sales. And even today the battle continues against the giant salvinia plant that has become a horror-movie reality, multiplying rapidly and killing all life beneath its thick carpet of leaves and vines.

Still Caddo Lake has survived all these threats and remains one of nature's most amazing wonders in northwest Louisiana and east Texas. The lake has survived and flourished with the support of many individuals over the years. Let's not let something as foul as raw sewage diminish it now.