

Caddo Lake industrial site apparently a no-go

|By JULIA ROBB, Special Projects Editor|

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Harrison County Judge Wayne McWhorter said he believes a proposed industrial site at Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge has failed because Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison is not lending her support to the original concept.

McWhorter, local attorney Sam Moseley and city businessman Tommy Whaley proposed last year that the U.S. Defense Department give from 1,500 to 2,000 acres – which border Caddo Lake – to the county or state for industrial development.

That land had been scheduled to be transferred to the wildlife refuge, after contamination problems were addressed.

After McWhorter, Whaley and Moseley approached Hutchison (R-Texas) and Congressman Louie Gohmert (R-1st), the defense department put a hold on the land transfer.

It would have taken an act of Congress to give the land to the county or state, since the Department of the Interior had already requested the land, land advocates have said.

McWhorter said Thursday that Hutchison told him in a December phone conversation she supported giving only 100 to 200 acres to the industrial site.

"The big deal for me," McWhorter said, "is we were asking for 1,500 to 2,000 acres and the senator told me herself... 'well Wayne, it was never going to be more than 100 or 200 acres.'

"We have 100 to 200 acres in the Marshall Business Park, or it can be picked up about anywhere. The idea was to have a super site to attract a very large employer."

"We (McWhorter, Moseley and Whaley) have all said the same thing to each other, that if we can't get 1,500 to 2,000 acres we don't want it."

McWhorter said he wants to know if somebody miscommunicated, if the senator misspoke or if she always believed the industrial site would be from 100 to 200 acres.

But McWhorter said he has not been able to get an answer from the senator's staffers and has not spoken to the senator since the December conversation.

Although Gohmert was helping obtain the land, McWhorter said the senator is a key player and "If the senator is a no go, it doesn't matter which way the congressman goes."