

## **Editorial: Caddo Lake and industry**

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At times, in discussions of Caddo Lake and matters of local politics, emotions can get in the way of thoughtful discourse.

This has surely happened with the discussion of an industrial park at the site of the former Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant, which also just happens to be the site of a federal wildlife refuge.

Those who favor the industrial park see a former economic boon going, literally, to the birds. That is industry, tax money and jobs they seen gone forever.

Those who oppose any such an idea see this as a land grab designed to doom the wildlife refuge and line someone's pockets. They say the way to money is to utilize the refuge for eco-tourism.

It's our intention to step back from the politics today and look at some issues the way we see them. In no particular order of importance here are some of the thoughts we have, and they swing, at various times, to both sides of the issue.

Smoke-stack industry and a wildlife refuge cannot co-exist in that space. A chemical plant or steel mill would, we believe, ruin the wildlife refuge as any sort of tourist attraction. It would simply turn people away, not bring them in. But not all industry involves smoke stacks. Some types of clean industry might not violate the environment of that area. We would point to the fact that in Austin, industry and nature often co-exist because of restrictions and because companies know they must be environmentally aware.

The chances of attracting such a "clean" industry to that area are very small, perhaps infinitesimal. We can't really imagine this happening, but that doesn't mean that it is impossible. If such a thing were to be possible, it would take the economic development experts at the state level to make it happen. Just as it would be wrong to put a chemical plant at that site, it is wrong to say that no industry whatsoever would work there. Would we really turn away Microsoft?

The economic benefits of eco-tourism are extremely limited. We would hope that someday the wildlife refuge does become a major eco-tourist center. We think this community should take all possible measures to make it so. But the jobs created by tourism and the jobs created by industry simply do not compare. Tourism-related jobs are not, generally speaking, the kinds of jobs that include benefits or substantial growth opportunities for workers. Consequently, they aren't the kind of jobs that grow a community.

Marshall and Harrison County need industry. Over the last few years we have been very successful in this regard, but the march must go on and it would be helpful if we could all march together, respecting the needs of the entire community, instead of frequently marching in opposite directions.

We need a long-range plan. We've repeated this often, but it could be said daily and not be over-emphasized. A long-range plan could address the needs of tourism, industry, public facilities and environmental well-being.

We need to "believe the best" about others, even political adversaries. Emotions get in the way of discussions when we believe that others have hidden agendas and ulterior motives. In the current question at hand, we believe that all involved are stating positions they believe are the best for the lake and for Harrison County. This can be done without name-calling and hyperbole such as "land grab" or "environmental nuts." When we sink to that level, our chances at coming to a reasonable conclusion are slim to none.