

Hutchison remains strong supporter of Caddo Lake

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U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison on Monday said she has been asked to cut off federal funds going to the Caddo Lake Institute by interests opposed to the organization.

During an editorial board interview with the Marshall News Messenger, Sen. Hutchison said during controversy over the lake and the institute's operations she was asked both to cut off federal funds or reduce those funds going to the institute.

Despite a controversy last year centered on a Harrison County-generated proposal to use a portion of the former Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant property for a new industrial park, Sen. Hutchison said she remains a strong supporter of the lake.

"Caddo Lake is a national treasure," she said. "When we married the Caddo Lake Institute with Texas A&M for research – that was a good fit."

Sen. Hutchison said the arrangement has also negated some criticism the institute was possibly spending federal funds for purposes other than intended, such as to pay for legal expenses in an ongoing lawsuit with the city of Marshall over water rights.

"That effort (of merging Texas A&M with the institute) was a good way to keep things on track," she said. "The concept of getting A&M involved was to ensure the money is being spent on conservation and research of a scientific basis."

She has worked at the state and federal levels to create a cooperative relationship between Texas A&M University and the Caddo Lake RAMSAR Center. That center, established as a wetlands habitat for education, conservation and preservation, received \$1.5 million since the 2003 fiscal year, she said.

For the 2007 fiscal year, Sen. Hutchison said she has helped secure \$300,000 for Caddo Lake in the Senate Interior Appropriations bill.