

**Refuge official: 'We want all 8,500' acres**

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KARNACK – Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge Manager Mark Williams said Tuesday that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which he works for, went through a lawful process in attempting to take control of remaining Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant property.

The only way that process can be stopped is by an act of Congress, signed by the president of the United States, he said.

"We want all 8,500" acres "to the fence line," Williams said after he spoke to a crowded public meeting here, one organized by the Greater Caddo Lake Association.

Williams said the law states that when a federal agency is vacating land, it must first offer the land to all other federal departments and agencies, and then to the state and then local governments.

The fish and wildlife service opted to take the land the U.S. Army was vacating when it closed the Longhorn Plant – which made munitions – and create a wildlife refuge, he said.

Williams told the crowd of about 70 that fish and wildlife held a public meeting, in 2000 in Karnack, and discussed land use alternatives with local residents.

Almost everyone who attended the meeting favored some fish and wildlife involvement at Longhorn. Only one speaker favored economic development on the Longhorn land, and that was then Marshall City Manager Tony Williams.

"About 90 percent of the people who talked to us were in favor of the entire Army plant being a refuge," he said, in an interview.

Almost all letters sent to the agency favored establishing Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge on all of the Longhorn Plant's 8,500 acres, he said.

"What I'm saying is I want the interests of the public to be carried out," he said, explaining that means including all the Longhorn acreage in the refuge rather than transferring some acreage to the state for industrial development.

About 2,200 acres have not been transferred to the refuge.

Williams also quoted figures at the meeting from the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Recreational use on national wildlife refuges generated almost \$1.4 billion during 2004, Williams said. Nearly 37 million people visited refuges in 2004, creating almost 24,000 private sector jobs and producing about \$454 million in employment income, he said.

Jack Canson, Greater Caddo Lake Association board member, spoke against using the remaining Longhorn land for industrial development.

"This part of Harrison County is the least likely spot in the county to attract decent industrial development," he said.

Tommy Whaley, Sam Moseley and other Marshall residents asked federal and state officials to intervene in the permitting process that would have transferred the remaining Longhorn acreage – which is adjacent to Caddo Lake – to the refuge.

Whaley and Moseley said that want the state to take possession of the land so it can be used for industrial development.

It was announced a few weeks ago that the Army has halted the permit process.

But Canson said the only way to bring industry to Caddo Lake is to resurrect Lyndon Johnson and T.J. Taylor, Lady Bird Johnson's father, who was a Karnack resident.

Canson said his organization would appeal to all the people in East Texas because "this is their refuge too."

Speaker Henry Bradbury told the crowd that he was previously employed in site selection and industrial expansion and he does not believe the industry will be interested in a site that totally lacks infrastructure.

"It comes down to numbers. It's a dollars and cents thing," he said, citing the long ride to the interstate from the lake, which would cost many industries money, the need for water and sewage facilities at the Longhorn property, which would cost money, and the possibility contamination issues would play a part, especially in construction.

The Longhorn plant left a legacy of contamination, which the Army is still attempting to remedy.

An industry that wanted to use rail transportation would have to build a 2-mile spur, Bradbury said.

A representative from U.S. Representative Louie Gohmert's office also attended the meeting.

Brian Carl, the congressman's legislative assistant, said in an interview that Gohmert could not attend the meeting due to a prior engagement, but he wants to "hear the concerns" and wants them relayed to him.

The congressman," he said, "wants to make sure all sides are heard.

"This is a county issue. It's not something we are pushing."