

THE TIMES' OPINION

EDITORIALS

Caddo Lake

Examine threats to water quality

Citizen outcry in 1993 saved cypress-studded Caddo Lake from the environmental threat that a proposed federal navigation project would pose.

Citizen outcry also scaled down a master development plan from the Texas Wildlife and Fisheries Department to preserve the peacefulness so many people have sought in this place of awesome beauty, the only natural lake in Texas.

Citizen outcry again is needed concerning three newer threats to Caddo Lake: mercury contamination in larger gamefish on the west side of the lake; groundwater contamination at the old Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant nearby; and possible discharge of industrial contaminants from a soon-to-be-built chicken processing plant upstream.

The latter two developments threaten major sources of drinking water for residents of Longview, Texas, and Shreveport: Lake O' The Pines upstream of Caddo Lake, and Cross Lake, downstream.

The mercury, when ingested at concentrated levels by humans, can have severe effects on the brain and the central nervous system, especially in children and unborn babies.

Northwest Louisiana and East Texas residents, then, have a personal stake in what happens in this 32,500-acre wetland, even if they've never been lulled by the lapping of its waters, or sliced through them on skis.

Indeed, even as these environmental concerns have arisen, Caddo Lake has grown in importance as an ecotourist site. It's one of the reasons our region rates so highly as a family-oriented destination.

Texans especially flock to its shores for fishing, boating, birdwatching, canoeing, swamp tours, family vacations and overnight getaways.

Its charms must be protected, for visitors as well as full-time residents.

Residents should press government and industry for action and answers on these three ecological threats.

Already, cleanup from the ammunition plant, now a federal Superfund site, is under way in Harrison Bayou, which flows into Caddo Lake. Cleanup efforts must redouble before any contaminants reach the lake. Shreveport's Department of Water and Sewerage takes

OUR STAND

Citizens should take role in preservation

For more information, call or write:

Department of Water
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City of Shreveport
P.O. Box 31109
Shreveport, La. 71130
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Caddo water out through Twelve Mile Bayou when Cross Lake is low.

Conservationists and hundreds of area residents, meanwhile, are concerned about the proposed new Pilgrim's Pride plant on a Caddo Lake tributary, Big Cypress Creek. It has applied for a permit to dump 2.5 million gallons of wastewater a day, promising to first filter out all bacteria and contaminants.

But promises aren't enough, and all fears must be allayed before the grant is permitted. One public hearing has been held, but another is scheduled for Sept. 10, and concerned citizens should be there in force.

A mercury level of 1.63 parts per million has been detected in fish from the west side of Caddo Lake, considerably higher than the 1.0 parts per million that is considered a health risk. The public needs to know more about how the mercury develops, naturally or not, how to prevent it and how to reduce it, so corrective measures may be taken.

Finally, overall control and protection of Caddo Lake should be placed in the hands of a joint Texas-Louisiana commission. As it is, several state and federal agencies have some measure of authority over recreation, water quality or environmental issues, which makes it difficult to pin down responsibility or take action.

Those who love Caddo Lake and have fought so fiercely for it in the past must stay the course now. Their work is not yet done.