

## LAKE'S CONFLICTS RUN DEEP

Caddo Lake has a long history of conflicts surrounding it:

**1806:** A U.S. Army expedition sees the Great Raft, a massive dam of fallen trees that blocks the Red River and forms Caddo Lake, the largest naturally formed lake in the southern United States. It is believed that the raft began forming Caddo at the turn of the 19th century.

**1836:** To improve navigation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers unsuccessfully tries to demolish the dam.

**1873:** The Corps of Engineers uses explosives to destroy the log dam, aiming to improve navigation. That drains much of the lake, killing steamboat trade to Texas' largest port in Jefferson. Average lake water levels are less than 8 inches by 1912.

**1911:** The world's first offshore well is drilled in Caddo Lake near Oil City, La.

**1914:** The Corps of Engineers completes a dam at Mooringsport, La., restoring the lake. Oilmen campaigned for the dam to gain access to areas too swampy for land-based oil exploration. The world's first offshore drilling ensues. Some of the wells still produce today.

**1953:** Area governments form the Northeast Texas Water Supply District to build a reservoir on Big Cypress Creek. The district is formed, in part, to

develop water supplies that avoid stressing Caddo Lake. Marshall pulls out before the reservoir, Lake O' the Pines, is complete.

**1959:** Lake O' the Pines opens. It reduces flooding on Cypress Bayou, as well as natural scouring of dead vegetation and silt from Caddo Lake. Some lake advocates believe that has sped Caddo's "sitting in."

**Mid-'70s:** A German concern proposes building a paper mill upstream of Caddo. The project dies amid lake residents' objections.

**April 1977:** The Texas Water Quality Board reports that PCB levels in Caddo Lake are second highest of 31 Texas reservoirs sampled to that date. Lead and zinc levels are also high. The report concludes that the cause and effect is unknown.

**April 1978:** The Cypress Valley Navigation District, formed by Harrison and Marion counties to keep Caddo Lake accessible to boaters, files a federal suit to block Shreveport's plan to divert water from Caddo. Shreveport officials say they will take 10 million to 100 million gallons daily.

**January 1979:** The federal legal fight over Caddo ends with Louisiana and Texas agreeing to create a Caddo Lake Compact to oversee the lake's water

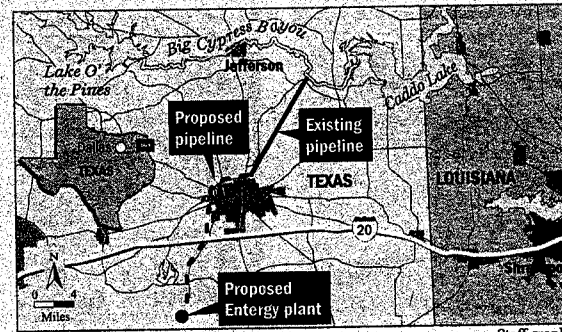
resources. That comes under immediate fire for proposing to raise Caddo's dam 2 feet and offering inundated Louisiana landowners fair market value for their land while affected Texas landowners would get original property cost.

**October 1979:** A U.S. House committee holds hearings in Marshall and hears extensive complaints about the proposed compact. Congress fails to approve it, and Shreveport shelves its plan to use Caddo Lake as a major water source.

**1986:** Marshall, Harrison County, Gregg County and Kilgore seek state approval to build Little Cypress Reservoir. Critics say most of Caddo's watershed drainage would be diverted. Caddo Lake residents and environmentalists mount a challenge in a two-year hearing that was the longest on record for the Texas Water Commission.

**1987:** The Corps of Engineers resurrects a proposal to extend the Red River Waterway barge canal 76 miles from Shreveport through Caddo Lake. The \$670 million Daingerfield reach project was originally authorized by Congress in 1968.

**August 1988:** The Texas Water Commission approves construction of Little Cypress Reservoir 15 miles upstream of Caddo Lake, but a bond



Staff graphic

election to finance it is defeated. A second election in October also fails.

**October 1992:** The Texas Nature Conservancy orchestrates acquisition of more than 6,000 acres of the lake, including ancient cypress brakes threatened by logging, to Caddo State Park.

**December 1992:** The Corps of Engineers decides that the Daingerfield reach project is not economically or environmentally justified and declares it "inactive" in 1994.

**October 1993:** Caddo Lake is listed as a "wetland of international importance"

under the Ramsar Treaty. It is among 15 such wetlands in the United States.

**1993:** Eagles band member and Linden, Texas, native Don Henley founds the Caddo Lake Institute to study and protect the lake.

**1993:** Texas Parks and Wildlife begins developing a lake management plan. The effort soon dies amid some local complaints about intrusion on property rights and after a critical speech in Marshall by Rick Perry, then a candidate for lieutenant governor.

**November 1995:** The Texas Health Department issues an advisory against

consumption of large-mouth bass and freshwater drum from Caddo Lake and Big Cypress Creek because of mercury contamination. Scientists believe high mercury levels and acidity in the lake are related to nearby lignite-burning power plants. Federal reports show the area has the highest rainfall acidity of any location west of Louisiana and is home to three of the country's top five mercury-emitting power plants. The mercury advisory remains in effect.

**June 2001:** The *Marshall News Messenger* reports that Marshall officials propose selling Caddo Lake water to Entergy Corp. for a gas-fired power plant south of town. The newspaper later reports that Marshall has for more than 40 years violated a state water permit requiring return of surplus water to the bayou feeding Caddo Lake.

**June 28, 2001:** Marshall approves the water sale to Entergy despite lake residents' opposition. Marshall asks the Texas Natural Resource and Conservation Commission to amend its water rights permits to allow the sale.

**March 15, 2002:** The TNRC executive director signs an amendment allowing Marshall to sell water to industry. Lake advocates say they will ask the commission to overturn the decision.