

OUT OF HIBERNATION

U.S. Army, U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials formally sign agreement to create refuge

By **GAIL K BEIL**
News Messenger

Many of those involved in a seven-year effort to turn the shuttered Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant into a research and recreation center crowded into the T.J. Taylor Center in Karnack Saturday as representatives of the U.S. Army formally turned over control of the property to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department.

They cheered at U.S. Rep. Max Sandlin's promise to seek an appropriation not only for the \$1 million a year for the research center asked for by Don Henley, singer and founder of the Caddo Lake Institute, but another \$2 million in new money for U.S. Fish and Wildlife to prepare and operate the 7,200-acre refuge center which will also be used for education and research.

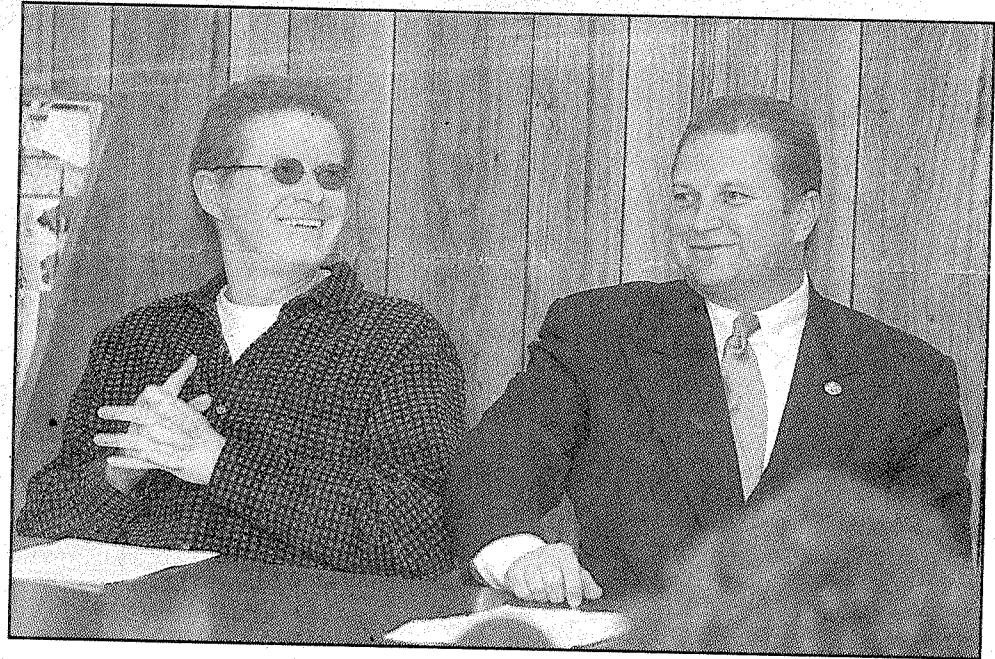
"Let's imagine together what the end of Longhorn's long hibernation can look like and how it might refresh our lives and hopes," Henley said. "Our vision for Longhorn is intended to support and be complimentary to the additional funding and management needs of the refuge. That's why we want to share it with everyone today."

Using a borrowed pen, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Installations and Environment for the Department of the Army Ray Clark and Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks of the Dept. of the Interior Ken Smith executed the document making the transfer possible.

The joint signing was followed by a standing ovation.

In his brief speech, Henley had

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SINGER-ENVIRONMENTALIST Don Henley shares a laugh with Congressman Max Sandlin during dedication ceremonies for the 7,200-acre Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday afternoon. Henley established the Caddo Lake Institute which will operate a 15-acre campus on the site to promote the wetlands.

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asked for a \$1 million to operate the research center and fund some of the research and another \$250,000 to complete renovation of two of the recyclable buildings for research and office space. That amount includes renovation of an interpretive center for day visitors to be named in memory of Mollie Beattie, late director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife. She was the first person, Herley said, to let him and Dwight Shellman in the door when they came in 1993 with their vision for continued life for the Longhorn plant.

Shellman, president of the Caddo Lake Institute, which will operate the research center, was praised by a number of the dignitaries for his tenacious pursuit of the effort to find a economically viable use for the plant that borders on Caddo Lake.

Sandlin was one of those

who honored not only Shellman but the residents of Harrison and Marion counties who "kept pushing and pushing until the exchange was complete."

"I'll agree with all of you," Sandlin told the visiting dignitaries. "Shellman can just bug the hell out of you — but that is what it takes to make the vision a reality."

"I want to make three points," Sandlin said. "First, we must preserve and promote Caddo Lake as a national treasure."

It must be promoted as a nationally recognized recreational area, he continued.

"Third, it's important that we use this as an educational opportunity. I foresee a time when we can grow pine trees specifically for our area."

The 8,500-acre site, first opened in 1942 to manufacture dynamite for the U.S. Army during world War II, closed as

a military plant in 1993. Its last official function was the destruction of Pershing rocket motors as part of the U.S. Soviet Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty, in 1993, marking the end of the Cold War in 1993.

It is projected that the remaining 1,200 acres will be managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife as soon as the Environmental Protection Agency pronounces them free from pollution.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were Regional Administrator for the EPA Gregg Cooke, representatives of Texas A.&M, Texas Tech, Wiley College, East Texas Baptist University, Panola College and Stephen F. Austin State University, who sent the Chairman of the Forestry Department, Dr. Scott Beasley.

Jim Neal, who has worked with Caddo Lake as both a member of the staff for both

U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Texas Parks and Recreation was singled out as the man who first had the vision of a new use for Longhorn that would again promote high tech jobs and important research.

Tom Cloud, field supervisor for U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the man who first wrote the Ramsar application recognizing Caddo Lake a wetland of international importance, came from Ft. Worth, as did representatives from the National Wetland Research Center in Lafayette, La. and Murray Lloyd of Shreveport who serves on the Louisiana Governor's environmental board and has also labored for preservation of the Louisiana side of Caddo Lake.

Sitting quietly in the corner absorbing the proceedings was Fred Dahmer.

Dahmer worked for Longhorn years ago, photographed the lake and its environs frequently, and finally wrote a slender volume called, "Caddo Was..." that became an important tool in the effort to preserve the fragile beauty of Texas only naturally formed lake. Now he is often referred to as "The Sage of Caddo."

"I was so overwhelmed by