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**Today's  
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## Peacetime future for Longhorn

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News Messenger

It looks as though the swords of war will truly be beat into plowshares, where the 8,500-acre Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant in Karnack is concerned.

Dwight Shellman, president of the Caddo Lake Institute, said an agreement was signed last week by the U.S. Army, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Caddo Lake Institute to pursue creation of a wildlife refuge on approximately 7,200 acres of the old plant.

Negotiations have gone on for four years, Shellman said. But they have been so intense in the last four months that he said he has been on a regular shuttle between Caddo Lake and Washington D.C.

"Mostly, I've been in Washington," he said.

The sticking point of the negotiations was the all-or-nothing land lease policy of the Army. There are at least five Superfund sites on the land once used to make pyrotechnics, Pershing and Sergeant

rocket motors and artillery shells.

In addition the rotting wooden buildings still standing have asbestos siding and some may have asbestos insulation. Nobody wanted those contaminated properties — not even the U.S. Army.

Finally, a way for U.S. Fish and Wildlife to accept the uncontaminated part of the land was found.

The Army is still responsible for the clean up required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Shellman said both the EPA and the General Services

Administration, which handles the disposal of federal property endorsed the agreement.

The Caddo Lake Institute, founded and funded for the most part by singer-environmentalist Don Henley in 1993, already has a lease on several hundred acres, including a recreational area known as Starr Ranch.

"This announcement is particularly appropriate for Memorial Day, 2000," Shellman said. Four federal agencies

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# LONGHORN

## *Longhorn Army Ammunition plant has new use*

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have joined to work toward the potential conversion of Longhorn from an idle 20th century military facility that contributed greatly to the nation's security to a 21st century investment in peacetime economic development, natural stewardship research and education, and eco-tourism."

He also said surveys predicted an added \$1 million per year to the communities around Caddo Lake.

Shellman has not done his negotiations alone, he said, giving great credit to Harrison County Commissioner James Mooney and a group of Uncertain and Karnack residents he called "The Longhorn Refuge Neighbors Association."

Two members of that group, who went with Shellman to look at other wildlife refuges and other adaptive reuse of abandoned war industry land were Robin and Betty Holder, who live in Uncertain and own the Caddo Grocery there.

"We're very excited about it," Robin Holder said. "I think anything else done with it would have been a terrible waste."

Holder also knows that change will have to come to Uncertain

and Karnack if it remains the charming lakeside village it now is.

"There is a need for a sewer system in Uncertain," Holder said. "And we're going to have to have some zoning to keep out fast food places and franchise motels. Anyone that wants a Quarterpounder can go to Shreveport or Marshall. They aren't that far away."

Holder's opinion is one shared by Steve and Jean Wherneke. He is a new Uncertain alderman and she is the organizer of the Uncertain Chamber of Commerce.

Is Uncertain ready for the influx of people \$1 million represents?

"We both feel we're not ready," Steve Wherneke said. "We need to adopt some zoning ordinances to keep out the franchise motels and fast food places. By the same token, we want to keep Caddo Lake the way it is now."

"I'm from the East Coast, Jean is from England, but we met in Uncertain, and Caddo Lake is a beautiful lake. There is nothing like it."

The Whernekes also see that a proper sewage system is vital. "We've still got people dumping raw sewage into Caddo Lake," he said.

If Caddo Lake has a sage, it is Fred Dahmer, long recognized for his love of the lake and his efforts to keep it as pristine as it can be kept.

"Wonderful," was his reaction when he heard the news of the agreement.

Dahmer worked for Longhorn and said that several years ago, he was taken on a tour of the virgin forests that make up the larger part of the 7,200 acres to change hands.

"The forest floor was covered so deeply in leaves and pine straw. It hadn't been disturbed. It was fabulous to me."

Dahmer whose photography has included a documentation of many of the wildflowers and wildlife of the area, as well as the trees and fish of the lake itself, said his guide on that day was the professional forester hired by the U.S. Army to manage and protect the forest land.

"He did his best to preserve it," Dahmer said.

So now, if all goes as planned, where colonels once commanded, coreopsis will grow, and the flora and fauna native to East Texas, as well as the feathered seasonal visitors will abound.