

Completing Caddo Lake Wildlife Refuge

Marshall News-Messenger

Posted: Monday, October 3, 2011 7:27 am

It seems to us that there are two parts to the United States Army.

First, there is that large majority which goes above and beyond the call of duty to protect and defend the citizens of the United States of America. That part of the Army will be always heralded by this newspaper and all citizens for the glory of its performance.

Then there is a tiny other part, which we shall hereinafter refer to as the Department of the Army, which seems to be most intent upon protecting itself.

It is the Department of the Army we would discuss in this editorial and question why its bureaucrats seem so intent on keeping the full allotment of property from the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

The Department of the Army is now holding up progress on making the wildlife refuge whole, keeping our area from fully recognizing the full benefits of the refuge.

To make another comparison in point: The Army does the impossible. The Department of the Army keeps the possible from getting done.

The last land was transferred from the Department of the Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department four years ago and since then there has been nothing but stalling. Now, it appears we have moved from stalling to outright refusal.

This is something we do not understand, especially since the national wildlife refuge was created by Congress, has the full support of both U.S. senators from this state, as well as U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert, who represents the area in which the refuge lies. Gohmert even served in the other part of the Army, the one which gets things done.

There is, or should be, no matter of contention on any level. We don't know what might be causing the delay, and we suspect that no one knows outside the Department of the Army. It could be that no one inside knows either, just that the transfer is caught up in some massive ball of red tape.

No matter what the cause, this is something that needs to be fixed quickly. The people of Harrison County have waited nearly a decade since the creation of the refuge for it to be whole. It is far past time for the Department of the Army to come through.

In doing so we would again call on Sen. Hutchison and Rep. Gohmert, who have proved themselves to be steadfast friends of Caddo, to please come to the forefront again and give the Department of the Army the gentle push, or perhaps a bit of a shove, that it needs to move off high center.

Some years back there was a misguided attempt to stop the refuge from happening and to save the land for industrial development. Fortunately, many people in Harrison County came together to see that this move was set aside, as it should have been.

This delay and that have nothing to do with one another other than to prove the wildlife refuge has already weathered some storms and it will weather this one. We have persevered before and we shall again. The Army could stop us, but the Department of the Army doesn't have a chance.