



## ***The Neches River***

The Neches River is an irreplaceable asset. Its bottomland forests provide timber to area mills and terrific recreational and scenic opportunities to Texans. The Neches is the heart of the Central Flyway, with millions of waterfowl depending on its waters on their yearly migration. The River sustains the Big Thicket National Preserve, national forests, state parks, and wildlife refuges on its way to the Sabine-Neches estuary.

### ***The Neches – Wild and Scenic***

Texas Conservation Alliance and numerous other citizen groups are proposing that the stretch of the Neches River from below the Lake Palestine Dam to the upper flood pool of B.A. Steinhagen Reservoir be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Designating this 216-mile segment would protect the river from proposed reservoirs and enhance its value as a tourist destination.

Designating the Neches as a Wild and Scenic River would prohibit further dams while allowing other uses of the river to continue. Use and management of private land along the river would not be affected. Timber, agriculture, hunting, fishing, and other recreational uses would continue as before. Projects within the bed and banks of the river which already require a federal permit would be reviewed for potential impacts on the Wild and Scenic values of the river as part of the permit process.

### ***Benefits of Designating the Neches as a Wild and Scenic River***

The most immediate and obvious benefit of designating the Neches would be protecting private landowners from land condemnation, and the timber and agriculture industries from interruption of their commerce. Wild and Scenic Rivers in other parts of the country have significantly enhanced tourism, improving local economies. The Neches River provides outdoor recreation for East Texans and tourists alike.

### ***Steps toward Adding the Neches to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System***

The first step toward designating the Neches as Wild and Scenic is for Congress to authorize a study of the river's eligibility and suitability for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The National Park Service and/or U.S. Forest Service would head the study, bringing together stakeholders in the designation study process.

If the study results in the recommendation that the Neches be part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, Congress must pass a second bill to make the designation official. This provides an additional safeguard for landowners and others dependent on the river, as such a bill would be carried by local Members of Congress responsive to their constituents' concerns.



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