

## U.S. Supreme Court Denies Request to Hear Neches River Refuge Case



Photos courtesy Adrian Van Dellen

(NEWS RELEASE) - The U.S. Supreme Court announced today that the Court will not hear the lawsuit brought by the City of Dallas and Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) against the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge. Dallas and TWDB had sought to block the refuge to keep the site available for a potential future reservoir.

"We heartily endorse the Court's decision -- the Neches River Refuge will be great for East Texas!" said Dr. Michael Banks, Co-Chair of Friends of the Neches River. "It'll provide recreation, draw tourists, protect vital habitat for wildlife and waterfowl, and protect the landowners along the river from condemnation."

"There is enough water in existing reservoirs for Dallas to have all the water it needs for future growth," added Janice Bezanson, Executive Director of Texas Conservation Alliance. "Dallas could tap Lake Texoma, Wright Patman Reservoir, or Toledo Bend Reservoir for its future supplies."

Dallas' plans were to draw only about 3% of the City's future demand from the proposed Fastrill Reservoir.

"The proposed Fastrill Reservoir was not a particularly good source of water for Dallas," continued Bezanson. "Dallas and other cities in the Metroplex can get a lot more water for similar or less cost from existing reservoirs. Using water from already-developed reservoirs avoids condemning people's land and harming the timber-agribusiness economy of East Texas."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified the site of the Neches River National Wildlife Refuge decades ago as a priority site for conserving habitat for wildlife, songbirds, and migratory waterfowl. Plans are in place for the Neches River Refuge to acquire more than 6,000 acres once the case brought by Dallas and TWDB is finalized. In the long term, up to 25,000 acres may be added to the refuge.

"This decision is a win for East Texas and in the long run also a win for Dallas," concluded Banks. "The Refuge will benefit everyone – local residents and folks from Dallas and other urban areas in need of a place to get outdoors."