



Study bill requested to name Neches River 'Wild and Scenic'

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TYLER (KYTX) - The effort to protect more of the Neches River is picking up steam, now that elections are over.

Friends of the Neches River are hoping to get U.S. Representatives Louie Gohmert and Jeb Hensarling's attention soon. They want a study bill introduced into congress early next year so the Neches can be designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

On Friday, a panel presented some of the key benefits for designating the Neches river as wild and scenic to the Tyler Junior Garden Club and other East Texans who have a vested interest in the plan.

Dr. Michael Banks says this would protect landowners from imminent domain for any future reservoirs. It would also protect the wildlife, plant life and hardwood river bottoms. And ultimately, it would be a boost for the East Texas economy. "I think this is a way for East Texans to diversify eco-tourism to East Texas that we don't necessarily have. We have lakes and parks, but this is a way to utilize this treasure we have," says Dr. Michael Banks, Friends of the Neches River.

Ellen Temple says she fell in love with the river 15 years ago during a trip down it. Now she's passionate about saving it. "I want our children to experience this as a free-flowing river and the study bill is all about examining what it would do. Bottom line is it would stop dams and there's a lot of pressure to dam up the river," says Ellen Temple.

There is a 32-mile section of the Neches already preserved as a wildlife refuge. Conservationists say becoming a wild and scenic river would protect 400-miles of the river from Tyler to Beaumont.

Now, if you'd like to get involved in protecting the Neches River, Dr. Banks says you can write your congressman a letter asking them to support a bill in congress to authorize a study for the potential of the Neches to be a Wild and Scenic River.