



## Neches Wild and Scenic River Initiative

### WATER RIGHTS

Existing water rights would not be affected if the Neches River were designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

Cities, industries, and other water rights holders would continue to divert and use water according to their existing permits from the State of Texas. The authority to permit water rights for the river would remain the purview of the state.

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the federal government may acquire water rights for a Wild and Scenic River through the state's water appropriation system. In what are called "prior appropriation states" (which includes Texas), any water rights acquired by the federal government would be considered junior to existing water rights.

To date, federal water rights have been reserved on rivers in only six of the thirty-seven states which have Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act restricts the amount the federal government can acquire to the minimum necessary to preserve the free-flowing condition of the river and to preserve the values for which the river was designated.

*Source of information: Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council, composed of representatives of the federal agencies which manage Wild and Scenic Rivers System*