



Neches Wild and Scenic River Initiative

UPSTREAM RESERVOIRS

The heart of the Wild and Scenic Rivers program is keeping rivers free-flowing. Designating the Neches River as a National Wild and Scenic River would protect industry, business, and tourism in Jefferson and nearby counties by prohibiting construction of reservoirs proposed upstream on the Neches. Most of the water from the proposed reservoirs would be piped outside East Texas to Dallas-Fort Worth or other urban areas. Diverting water to other parts of the state would reduce the flow of the Neches, impacting industry, business, and nature downstream.

The Lower Neches Valley Authority has proposed construction of Rockland Dam, which would flood 125,000 acres of timber, agriculture, and hunting land along the middle Neches. 80% of the water from the new reservoir would be sold outside of the Neches Basin, significantly reducing the flow of the Neches downstream. Two other proposed reservoir projects, Fastrill on the north end of the river and raising Dam B to increase the size of B.A. Steinhagen Reservoir, would further reduce Neches flows.

Economic Importance of Neches River Flows

Industries along the lower Neches rely on Neches River flows to dilute effluent. Marshes that help protect Southeast Texas cities for hurricane storm surges depend on freshwater inflows from the Neches to maintain marsh vegetation. Waterfowl hunting, shrimping, and commercial and sport fishing in Sabine Lake would be impacted if Neches River flows were diminished. The Big Thicket National Preserve, which draws more than 100,000 tourists per year to the area, is heavily dependent on Neches River flows to nourish its exceptionally diverse habitat.

Southeast Texas Does Not Need New Reservoirs for Water Supply

East Texas and Southeast Texas have no need for new reservoir development. Current supplies in Sam Rayburn and Toledo Bend Reservoirs are sufficient to far more than meet any foreseeable demand for future water. Should Southeast Texas ever need additional water from the Neches, it could be drawn directly from the river (as is currently done) without building an upstream reservoir.