

Texas agencies spar over Caddo Lake proposal

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DALLAS -- The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is accusing another state agency of endangering Caddo Lake by ignoring state law and environmental concerns in its handling of the city of Marshall's bid to sell lake water.

A letter from the parks department to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission said it was promised a role in studying Marshall's plan but was left out after the environmental agency director "summarily dismissed the opportunity for an environmental analysis."

Parks department officials said they haven't been able to review information on the proposal, which is a departure from past cooperation between the agencies.

That could be the result of a recent conservation commission announcement that information would be shared between agencies only if an open records request is filed, a new requirement that eliminates access to drafts and internal documents once exchanged freely, said the chief of parks and wildlife's water resources branch.

Caddo Lake is a primeval expanse of shallow pools, sloughs and cypress swamps along the Texas-Louisiana border.

Marshall officials announced a plan last summer to sell Entergy Power Ventures up to 5.5 million gallons of water daily from the lake for a power plant being built in Harrison County. Some area residents have protested the attempt to sell their water to the power plant.

The natural resource agency could approve the plan as soon as Monday. Director Jeff Saitas said his agency can't require an environmental assessment because the city already has a permit to use the water and is only seeking an amendment to sell some to the power plant. Because there was no environmental assessment before Marshall obtained the original water rights in 1947, Saitas said, none can be required now.

Marshall officials said their plan wouldn't harm the lake because it requires Entergy to buy replacement water when the lake falls to a certain level.