

THE CADDO LAKE RAMSAR WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Almost 20,000 acres of wetlands on the Texas side of Caddo Lake have been designated as “Wetlands of International Importance” under the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar site includes both public and private lands in and along Caddo Lake and some of its tributaries. The Ramsar designation was accomplished through unique collaborations between the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, the Caddo Lake Institute and many others. Additional wetlands in Texas and Louisiana could qualify and be added to the Caddo Lake Ramsar site with the owners permissions, additional scientific analysis and the approval of the appropriate local, state and federal agencies.



Ramsar

HISTORY OF THE DESIGNATION

On October 23, 1993, Caddo Lake became the thirteenth Ramsar Site in the United States. The original designated area included approximately 8,000 acres of public land, mostly in the Caddo Lake State Wildlife Management Area. In 1998, the designation was expanded to include approximately 12,000 additional acres. The expansion includes 1,400 acres of the U. S. Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant, which has now become the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge. It also includes private lands.

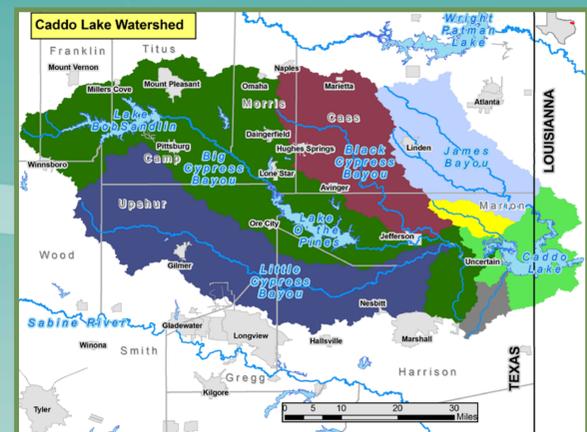
VALUE OF THE DESIGNATION

The Ramsar designation brings no new regulations or legal protections. It is, however, an important recognition, an honor that can contribute to protection of the wetlands and bring resources to the local economy. It can and has been used at Caddo to generate interest in the larger Caddo area and to encourage the local communities to work together and find ways to protect the resources while expanding the use of the wetlands. It has highlighted the need for strong scientific research based on principles developed in the U.S. and around the globe. The designation does attract tourists. Visitors to the U.S. from Russia, China, Brazil and other countries have already made Caddo one of their U.S. stops because of the designation.

BASIS FOR DESIGNATION

Caddo Lake received its designation as a “Wetland of International Importance” by meeting a number of Ramsar criteria. Many of the attributes that qualified Caddo Lake for the designation are:

- The Caddo Lake wetlands contain one of the best examples of a mature flooded bald cypress forest in the U.S. Some cypress trees in the wetlands are 400 years old.
- Approximately 216 bird, 47 mammal, 86 fish and 90 reptile and amphibian species are found in the area, many of which depend on the specialized habitat provided by the wetlands of Caddo Lake. There are at least 18 species of game fish.
- The wetlands of Caddo Lake are important to migratory bird species. The area supports one of the highest breeding populations of wood ducks and prothonotary warblers in the U.S.
- The wetlands support important populations of rare and endangered species, including the alligator snapping turtle and the eastern big-eared bat.



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