

# Officials soon to decide if Matagorda Island a keeper

United Press International  
AUSTIN — Federal officials say they will make a final decision soon on a hotly disputed plan to turn management of government-protected Matagorda Island over to the state.

The island is the winter home of the rare whooping crane and a nesting spot for other endangered species such as the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle. Environmental groups are skeptical of the ability of the state to protect the wetlands from developers.

Texas governors have pushed for ownership of that section of the island near Corpus Christi since 1975 when the Air Force relinquished its title. Texas owns 17,500 acres of marsh and swamplands on the

island, and another portion is privately owned.

The Interior Department recommended Monday that management of Matagorda Island be turned over to the state of Texas. Officials with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the General Services Administration say they expect to make a final decision on the plan by Dec. 6.

Gov. Bill Clements has proposed leaving the land in the federal wildlife system, but transferring management of the acreage to the state.

The Interior Department, which manages the land through the Fish and Wildlife Service, says the transfer is the best way to manage the property. Alternatives include keeping

the land under federal control, returning the land to its original owners or placing it under various levels of state management.

But environmentalists are worried.

"We are prepared to go to court on this," said Steve Parcells of the Washington-based Defenders of Wildlife.

"The implications of what happens to Matagorda Island have implications for the rest of the national wildlife refuge system."

While the situation in Texas is unique, Parcells said, "we have to look at it in a broader perspective. If an exception is made here, it might be made in Alaska, Florida and in other parts of the refuge system."

Citing the state's "poor track record" of managing natural areas, Dallas lawyer Ned Fritz said the state might turn Matagorda into another Coney Island.

"The state has a record of over-development of areas it supervises in general and coastal areas in particular," he said. "When we already have a good manager of the lands, why change it for someone who cannot promise to do better and who is very likely to do worse?"

State officials said environmentalists' concerns are exaggerated and that wildlife habitats will not be altered. But a plan exists to build roads, water and sewer treatment plants and limited hunting and camping facilities.



Contest winners

Mr. & Ms. Wrangler were chosen at the Hall of Fame Monday night in a benefit held to raise money for the United Way. Angie Kerr, left, a senior from Temple studying journalism, presents Yvonne Cuzick, a sophomore from San Antonio studying journalism, and J. Bryan Fletcher of Bryan, with their gift certificates for winning the contest. The prizes were \$75 gift certificates for Wrangler clothes and a \$20 meal at Bennigans.

# TV thriller causes hysteria in Austin

United Press International  
AUSTIN — The broadcast of "The Slime Creatures Invade Austin," a Halloween television special aired by a local station, prompted 170 calls to emergency personnel from persons who thought they were in the monster's deadly path.

"It used a classic theme," said Martha Hartzog, general manager of the Austin public television station that broadcast the movie on two successive nights. "It started out like a movie with people going to the beach. The slime creature rises out of the water and destroys them. Then it cuts away to a mock news bulletin about the creature in Austin."

Hartzog said the fake news-cast showed footage of the monster at Mount Bonnell and Lake Travis, two local landmarks.

Despite disclaimers that the show was only a Halloween thriller, officials staffing the city's 911 emergency number said they received nearly 100 calls when the show first aired Saturday night. A local hospital reported about 25 calls.

"We had people telling us that they were watching a news bulletin showing this monster mutilating people in Austin," said Mary Lopez, a supervisor with the city's emergency services. "They wanted to know what they should do."

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