Audubon Society opposes water development plan

Associated Press

AUSTIN - A leading conservation group Tuesday declared its opposition to the statewide water development plan that Gov. Mark White and others hailed as a key achieve-ment of the 1985 Legislature. The National Audubon Society

said the plan lacks strong requirements for water conservation or environmental protection and includes

only loose fiscal controls.

The \$1.4 billion water plan — a pair of proposed constitutional amendments that must be approved by voters Nov. 5 to take effect — has too many flaws, said Dede Armentrout, vice president of the Audubon

Society's southwest region.

Ms. Armentrout said the plan shortchanges protection of bays and estuaries, doesn't guarantee that river systems will continue to sup-port fish and wildlife and fails to make certain there won't be too many reservoirs "holding back too much of our rivers' natural flows."

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The Audubon Society, which counts 20,000 members in Texas, became the first major environmental group to oppose the plan. Ms. Armentrout said the decision was made by a half dozen of the Texas group's leaders.

The water plan was the Legislature's response to dire predictions about the state's future if the booming population growth continues without sufficient planning for water supplies.

Proposition 1 would authorize \$980 million in bonds for water supply, quality and control projects. It also would create a \$250 million insurance fund to guarantee water bonds issued by cities and other po-

litical subdivisions.

Proposition 2 would authorize \$200 million in bonds for low-interest loans to farmers to buy water-saving equipment.

Although the Audubon Society recognizes the need for water controls, Ms. Armentrout said lawmakers could have done better.

"I think there's hope we can get something better. Water is probably among the top two or three issues in the state," she said.

She said the plan could trigger pork barrelling by legislators who would be able to trade support for water projects in their districts since the plan would eliminate requirements for voter approval of state spending on water projects.

She noted that voters have rejected plans for pumping water from the Mississippi or other rivers to West Texas and for dredging the Trinity River to allow ship traffic from the Gulf Coast to Dallas.

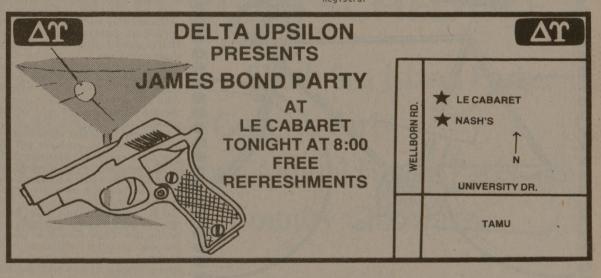
"Both of these water projects have met defeat at the polls time and time again. With the new amendment, however, the decision will be taken out of the voters' hands and placed in the political arena," she said.

"Texas taxpayers should think twice about embracing the pork barrel generated by Proposition 1," she In the past, certain information has been made public by Texas A&M University as a service to students, families, and other interested individuals.

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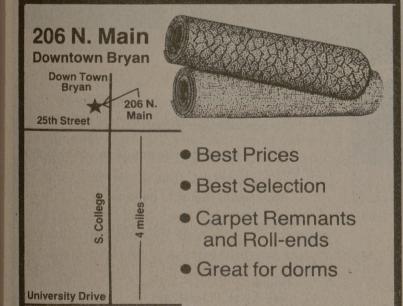
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