



magnolia potpourri - opinion

Lake Creek Bottomlands: a vital Montgomery County asset

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Montgomery County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state partly due to its proximity to Houston and its natural amenities supporting outdoor recreation.

The 161,508 acre Sam Houston National Forest in the north of the county, the 21,000 acre Lake Conroe in the north central, and the 1,725 acres in Jones State Forest in the south, are key attractions along with the numerous wooded developments and acreage communities.

The county also has some of the most pristine streams and associated bottomland hardwood forests in the Houston area.

Although little known, it also contains the western extent of many of the habitats contained in the Big Thicket National Preserve.

The rapid development of the county is placing extreme pressure on the existing green space which in turn is placing pressure on water quality, wildlife habitat and flood control. Some areas of the county should not be developed due to high risk of flooding, yet have high value for outdoor recreation, water quality preservation and flood control.

These are the flood plains along the San Jacinto River, Spring Creek and Lake Creek.

These flood prone bottomlands offer an opportunity to develop additional green space, while allowing development to continue in most of the intervening uplands.

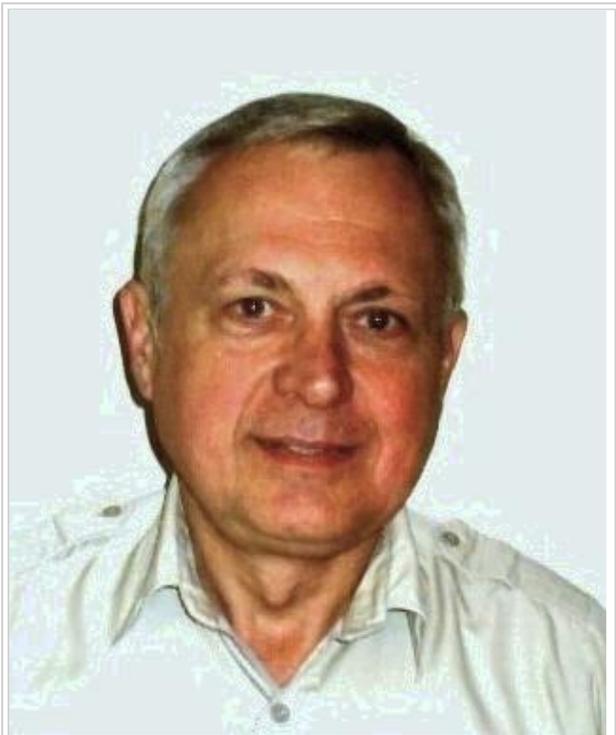
These types of amenities add value to the nearby development properties and attract young professionals to the community. Houston and Harris County have already recognized the value of these linear greenbelts along their bayous and streams and are undertaking restoration projects along these features.

Montgomery County and Harris County are also in the process of developing a linear greenway along Spring Creek bordering the two counties. These are excellent amenities, but they are not conveniently located for the high growth areas north and west of The Woodlands.

Lake Creek and some of its tributaries contain some excellent examples of Big Thicket type habitats and are ideally situated near existing and developing communities. They also contain considerable forest and wetland to help mitigate flooding and pollution due to upland development.

The East 1488 Community Association and Keep Montgomery County Beautiful have recognized the value of this approach for the long term health of the county and are evaluating the possibility of developing a Lake Creek Greenway similar to what is being developed along Spring Creek.

Those who intend to remain in Montgomery County should seriously think about our legacy. The historical approach is unsustainable and will leave us with limited recreational areas, increased flooding and water pollution.



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We don't have much time to begin identifying and preserving those areas with the greatest recreational and environmental value.

It is clear that the success of such a project will require the involvement and support of the business and development communities as well as the affected property owners.

For an opportunity to learn more about this and other environmental issues visit First Presbyterian Church of Conroe's Environmental Fair on Sept. 18 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at 2727 N. Loop 336 W, in Conroe.

Buckley is a board member of the Keep Montgomery County Beautiful and president of the E. 1488 Community Association. For more information about Keep Montgomery County Beautiful visit www.kmcbtexas.org.

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