



Lavaca River Dam

The Lavaca–Navidad River Authority (LNRA) has applied for a state water rights permit to construct a reservoir on the Lavaca River and divert up to 96,000 acre-feet of water annually into an off-channel reservoir. The proposed reservoir would be located on property owned by Formosa Plastics, raising serious concerns that the project would primarily serve industrial expansion—either for Formosa’s existing operations or to supply water to a proposed new Exxon facility or other industrial users.

Formosa Plastics has a documented history of environmental non-compliance. In October 2019, the company agreed to a \$50 million settlement, the largest Clean Water Act settlement ever secured through a lawsuit brought by private citizens.

The Lavaca River is one of the few remaining free-flowing rivers in Texas. It flows roughly 115 miles from northeastern Gonzales County to Lavaca Bay, part of the larger Matagorda Bay system. Constructing this reservoir would significantly reduce freshwater inflows to the bay—an outcome with serious ecological and economic consequences.

Freshwater inflows are essential to sustaining reproductive habitat for fish, oyster reefs, shrimp, and other invertebrates. These inflows also underpin commercial and recreational fishing and provide critical food resources for shorebirds and migrating waterfowl, including the endangered Whooping Crane. Diverting nearly one-sixth of the Lavaca River’s freshwater contribution would further stress an estuarine system already under pressure.

Although the permit application lists municipal, manufacturing, and mining uses, there is no clear evidence of municipal or mining demand associated with this project. Instead, the proposal appears to involve infrastructure being built primarily to benefit a for-profit industrial user. The Matagorda Bay system has already suffered significant freshwater losses from projects such as Lake Texana and other upstream diversions. At a time when Texas bays are experiencing widespread ecological decline, protecting remaining freshwater inflows is critical. Further reductions threaten to compound existing damage and undermine decades of investment in coastal fisheries, wildlife, and local economies.

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