

1.11 DAVY CROCKETT NATIONAL FOREST

The Davy Crockett National Forest (DCNF) contains more than 161,000 acres of forested woodlands, streams, recreation areas, and wildlife habitat. Proclaimed a national forest in 1936, the DCNF is located in Houston and Trinity Counties and is centrally located within the Neches and Trinity River basins. It is one of four national forests in East Texas and is the only one that does not contain or is bounded by a major reservoir. As such, the principal water source for wildlife within the DCNF is the numerous creeks and bayous that bisect it and the Neches River, which forms its eastern boundary.

The area is generally characterized by level to gently rolling uplands and broad, flat bottomlands bisected by shallow creeks, while steeper slopes are found along the Neches River. The soils of the area consist of light-colored, acid sandy loams, and sands with some red soils in the uplands and light brown to dark grey, acid sandy loams, clay loams, and limited clays in the bottomlands (Texas Almanac, 2001). The area has poor drainage that results in numerous small ponds and backwater areas as many of the streams quickly flood during periods of heavy rainfall (Kelly 1995). The 30-year (1961-1990) mean precipitation in the DCNF ranges from about 42 in/yr in Houston County to 45 in/yr in Trinity County (Dallas Morning News, Inc., 2001).

Since unmanaged logging ended in the 1920's, the pine-hardwood forest has made a dramatic recovery. Numerous game species, including squirrel, deer, quail, dove, turkey, and waterfowl and at least one federally listed endangered species, the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), can be found within the forest. The DCNF is within the Austroriparian biotic province, which has been shown to contain 105 native fish species (Edwards et al. 1989). The majority of the DCNF lies within the South Central Plains ecoregion (Omernik and Gallant 1987). The least impacted stream of this ecoregion was identified by Twidwell et al. (1992) as Piney Creek. While performing quarterly sampling at ten streams within the DCNF between May 1994 and May 1995, Kelly (1995) collected 53 fish species from ten unclassified streams.

The following streams within the DCNF have been identified by the TPWD as meeting one or more of the criteria for designation as Ecologically Unique as defined by Senate Bill 1 (1997):

- Alabama Creek
- Austin Branch
- Camp Creek
- Cochino Creek
- Hackberry Creek
- Hager Creek
- Hickory Creek
- Lynch Creek
- Piney Creek
- San Pedro Creek
- Sandy Creek (Houston Co.)

A brief characterization of these streams and a description of the criteria they meet follows.