

### 1.9.7 Lower Sabine River

The Sabine River extends northeast of Sabine Lake and provides the lake with the largest discharge of freshwater at its mouth of any Texas river at about 6.8 million acre-feet of water annually. The river is slow moving, wide, and deep throughout the lower section allowing for the passage of ocean-going vessels (Belisle and Josselet 1974). Brackish-water marshes are common along the western margin of the river between the town of Orange and Sabine Lake (White et al 1987). Dredged canals and industrial ponds divide and compartmentalize much of the marshes along this stretch. Of particular interest along the lower Sabine River is Blue Elbow Swamp and surrounding bottomland forest that consists primarily of bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). Also along this section of the Sabine River are two sites on the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, the Tony Houseman State Park and Wildlife Management Area (UTC 001) and the Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area (UTC 021). The ecologically significant stream segment is from the confluence with Sabine Lake in Orange County upstream to the IH-10 crossing (within TCEQ classified stream segment 0501).

- **Biological function-** extensive freshwater and estuarine wetlands display significant overall habitat value considering the quantity and quality (Bauer et al 1991, Moulton and Jacob 2001, USFWS 2005).
- **Riparian conservation area-** fringed by the 3,313-acre Tony Houseman State Park/Wildlife Management Area and the 7,998-acre Lower Neches River Wildlife Management Area.

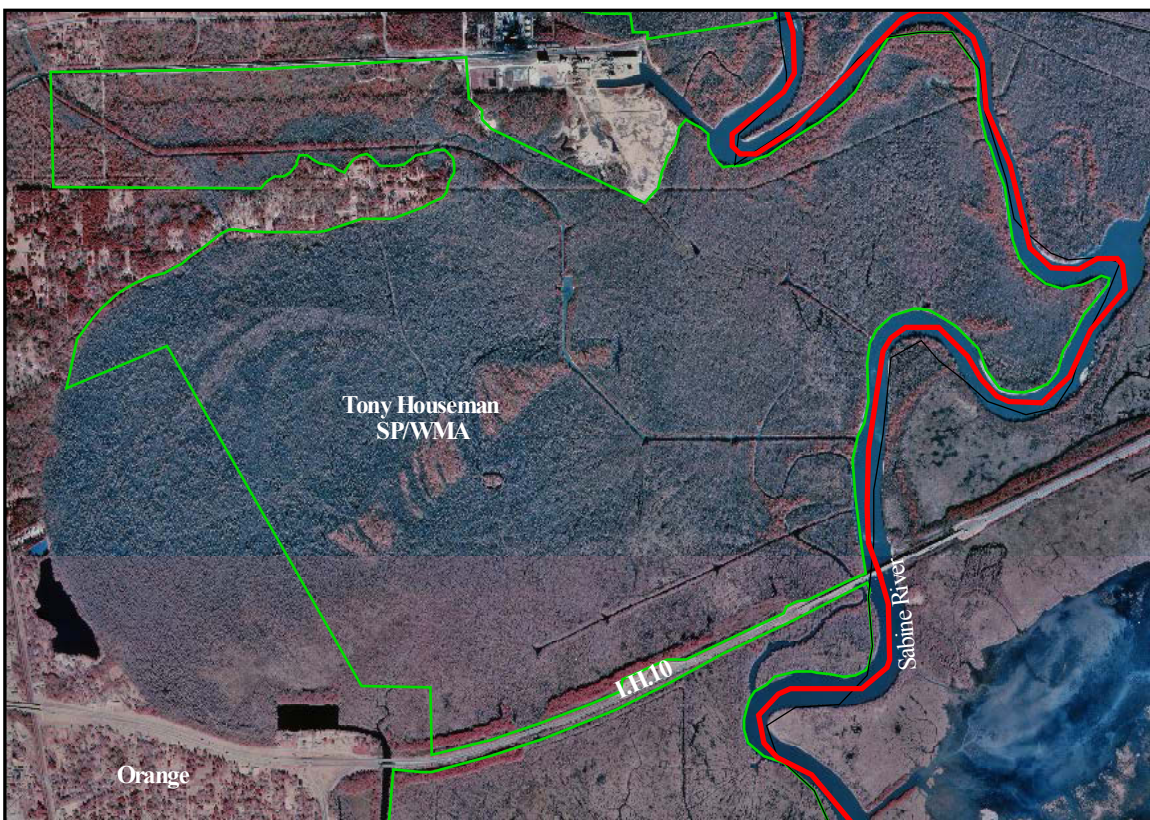


Figure 15. Sabine River at IH 10 in Orange County. Source: Orange DOQ, 1996.