

## Background:

In a remote county in Northeast Texas, it's time to replace an old bridge. No problem, right? Hold on. There are a few more details you need to know. The bridge will be built over an environmentally sensitive area—a small river that feeds a natural lake and protected wetland. The tributary is the Little Cypress Bayou and the lake is Caddo Lake. Also the bridge will be nearly a mile long and passes through an old growth forest. Then there is the matter of a beaver-dammed lake and a long ditch full of water. Finally add a nearby archaeologically sensitive site and you have an interesting set of problems. Impossible? Of course not. It's just one example of the type of projects that the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) tackles every day.

The bridge is located 3.6 miles south of Harleton, a small Northeast Texas community that depends on the road to get kids to school and to connect the city to the nearby community of Longview. On average, the bridge floods every five years, leaving the community cutoff from important areas to their south. The current bridge is located in a flood plain, dropping from 312 feet above sea level to about 221 feet above sea level in the mile leading up to the bridge from the north. The GPS coordinates of the bridge are: 32 Degrees 27' 25.87N and 94 Degrees 34' 37.15W.

The bridge was constructed in 1958 and is currently rated a 13 out of 100 on a scale used to measure the quality of bridges in the state of Texas. Pictures of the bridge structure are included (see [bridgepics.html](#)). Other obstacles to this bridge include water and endangered animal resources adjacent to the bridge, a possible archaeologically sensitive area located in the bridge right of way, a wetland area developed by a local beaver dams south of the project, dredged ditches filled with water, and catfish farms on the north side. Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) has placed the bridge near the top of their priority list as far as needs go. Therefore, the work has begun in the preliminary stages to replace the bridge.