

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release (June 6, 2005)



SOUTH WALLER COUNTY RECEIVES POSITIVE PRELIMINARY WILDLIFE REPORT

WCF, LLC has retained the renown expert environmental scientists with SWCA[®] Environmental Consultants (SWCA) to study the environmental issues related to the development of the South Waller County Airport, including wildlife and wetlands issues. SWCA has had a long and extensive involvement with the Katy Prairie including the area where the new airport is to be located.

Although not required to do so by law, WCF has commissioned SWCA to perform a wildlife study for the planned business aviation airport of the same magnitude and detail as would be required for a major air carrier airport. Upon completion of its study, SWCA will assist WCF in developing a comprehensive plan to mitigate any wildlife issues using the latest techniques and methods shown to be successful at airports around the world.

“While we aren’t required to commission this kind of study, we just think it is good business and the right thing to do,” said Ron Henriksen, WCF principal.

SWCA has offices throughout the United States and is highly respected. “We perform scientifically defensible research, we don’t just tell people what they want to hear. If we did otherwise, we would sacrifice the reputation we have worked so hard to build,” explained SWCA Managing Principal Brian Fairchild. “Our initial research and investigation does indicate that there are a number of wildlife issues at the South Waller County Airport site. However, none of those issues are anywhere near problematic as has been suggested by airport opponents, and none is insurmountable,” Fairchild continued.

Fairchild has spoken with Ron Merritt, an opponent of the Westside Airport proposed by the City of Houston in the 1980s, regarding the "Bird Avoidance Model" that formed the basis for his opposition a decade ago. Merritt acknowledged to Fairchild that he is bothered that the "bird avoidance model" utilizes a moving 30 year average of bird populations and recent changes get lost in the average. “I believe this is very critical since the average bird population, in east

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Waller County, since Merritt's objection in 1996 has been only thirty percent of the average of the 1977 to 2005 average used by the bird avoidance model," Fairchild explained. "We are seeing a significant decline in bird populations over the past decade based on regional counts. In fact, the amount of rice farming has dropped dramatically over the past 25 years and urbanization of the area means that there is significantly less food and habitat to attract birds."

SWCA's initial report not only describes the wildlife issues known to date, but provides suggestions on means and methods to best address those issues. "Once we complete our assessment, we will work with WCF to develop the most appropriate and comprehensive management plan for this site. We believe a business aviation airport can be safely operated on the site, given what we have seen to date," Fairchild concluded.

For more information about the South Waller County Airport, please contact spokesman Drew Coats at 281-945-5444.

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