

# The Senate of The State of Texas

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## TODD STAPLES

March 27, 2003

MAR 31 2003

Mr. Sean O'Keefe  
Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
NASA Headquarters  
300 E Street, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20546-0001

Dear Mr. O'Keefe:

As a Texas state senator, I represent a 16-county area in East Texas. Many of the counties I represent are deeply involved in the search and recovery process for the Space Shuttle Columbia.

The residents of East Texas have been and continue to participate in the search and recovery process for the space shuttle. In the early hours following the loss, we worked, hoping against hope for some positive sign. With the realization of the finality of the tragedy, we have been working with a sense of urgency, hoping to ease the pain of the families of the brave astronauts. Although we are sincerely saddened by the circumstances of this event, we consider it a great honor to assist your agency and the gracious NASA family throughout this tragic process.

Many of the local counties directly affected by the Columbia loss have been and are conducting various events to honor the memory of the shuttle crew. In Cherokee County, local citizens have proposed a unique idea to commemorate the lost astronauts. They wish to re-name a local reservoir project, currently called Lake Eastex, Lake Columbia or Columbia Reservoir.

The Texas Legislature has included Lake Eastex in the state-wide water plan. It will be built in Cherokee County under the direction of the Angelina and Neches River Authority and will serve as a vital water resource to many future generations of Texans.



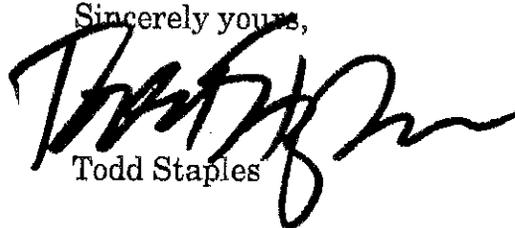
DISTRICT 3: ANDERSON, ANGELINA, CHEROKEE, HARDIN, HENDERSON, JASPER, NACOGDOCHES, NEWTON,  
POLK, SABINE, SAN AUGUSTINE, SAN JACINTO, SHELBY, TYLER AND PARTS OF MONTGOMERY AND SMITH COUNTIES.

Mr. O'Keefe  
Page 2  
March 27, 2003

While the residents of Cherokee County area are eager to establish a lasting testimony to the lives and sacrifices of the Columbia crew, it is important to obtain support from NASA before officially initiating the name change. No formal federal action is necessary; however, we do not wish to make the change unless NASA extends its approval.

Please find enclosed background material relating to the Lake Eastex project. We appreciate your consideration of this matter and look forward to your response. Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me or Kelley Stripling in my capitol office at 512-463-0103 or [Kelley.Stripling@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:Kelley.Stripling@senate.state.tx.us).

Sincerely yours,



Todd Staples

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Bascom Bentley, State District Judge, 369th District  
The Honorable James Campbell, Cherokee County Sheriff  
The Honorable Chris Davis, Cherokee County Judge  
The Honorable Chuck Hopson, State Representative, 11th District  
Mr. Joe Gordon, NASA Office of Public Affairs  
Mr. Kenneth Reneau, General Manager Angelina and Neches River Authority