Texas rivers are our liquid history –
Chronicles of the past,
Barometers of the present,
Prophets of the future.

Thousands of insignificant tributaries
Contribute their relatively minor aqueous deposits
Into rills, which become rivulets, then creeks
That finally feed into larger watercourses to become rivers -
Major arteries conveying the essential element of life across the land
As they wind their way toward the Gulf.

From the dawn of time rivers have been the focal point for settlement -
The location of cities and towns, the preferred sites for factories and commerce.
They have long been the basis for land ownership, boundary disputes, wars, and lawsuits
Between people, states, and nations, each seeking control of the water
To use for their own purposes and to gain advantage over others.

Our waters have been governed by the laws of six different nations.
They have seen once dominant civilizations and governments disappear entirely
They have witnessed the overnight establishment of bustling communities
Only to see them vanish almost as suddenly as they appeared.
They were the lifeblood of remote frontier outposts
Which have now become densely populated metropolitan cities.

For eons they weaved their way through the countryside
Unencumbered as they charted their own course.
They conformed only to the topography of the land
And yielded only to the laws of nature.

They ran wild and free –
sometimes as raging torrents
That might cut a new channel
Leaving an oxbow vestige of the old watercourse.
Other times they just meandered
Lazily and aimlessly across the landscape.
Today the rivers have been subdued and tamed.
No longer are they unconfined and natural.
Now they are controlled and manipulated
To fit the needs and wishes of modern civilization.
Some rarely flow and consist mostly of occasional pools of water. They run only when torrential downpours occur. Then they become a thick, soupy, reddish brown mix of water, debris, and soil, As they churn and stir and overflow their banks, Destroying lives and structures that encroached into the floodplain.

Many of the rivers have been altered - straightened, narrowed, deepened - By engineers, bulldozers, draglines, government planners - all with good intentions. They have been restricted by artificial barriers, Civilized by dams, weirs, locks, berms, and levees, To control their flow and their route.

Rivers and streams are harnessed and contained in earthen reservoirs To supply the voracious demands of urban landscapes - lush lawns and golf courses, Water parks and swimming pools, industries, and thirsty city dwellers. They say there is a desperate need to construct more dams and reservoirs for the future! More dams to further diminish the rivers and creeks?

Our legacy will not only be recorded in journals, It is there in the water for all to see. The handwriting is not on the wall Or in the pages of a book. It is in the river.

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