

Caddo Lake plant battle gets growing

By [RANDY ROSS](#)

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KARNACK — The battle to eliminate an invasive species from Caddo Lake is under way, and the lake's fighters have a new weapon.

Ken Shaw, chairman of the Cypress Valley Navigation District, said the organization will get a used airboat from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to use for spraying giant salvinia and other invasive plants. He talked to a group of about 35 at a community meeting in Karnack on Thursday night organized by the Caddo Lake Institute.



Randy Ross/News-Journal Photo

Ken Shaw gives an update on the fight against Giant Salvinia at Caddo Lake on Thursday at the Karnack Community Center.

Giant salvinia, water hyacinth and hydrilla are invasive plants that grow quickly, slowing water flow and choking out native vegetation. The plants can be found in several East Texas lakes.

"It's a major problem, and it's growing," Shaw said.

Shaw said a report from 2007 showed that 3,663 acres of water hyacinth and 50 to 100 acres of giant salvinia were on the Texas side of the lake. According to the department's Web site, the lake has 26,800 acres of surface area.

Shaw said the boat is part of an almost \$675,000 state plan to fight back the plants in Caddo Lake on both the Texas and Louisiana sides. The navigation district, which was established by the state to maintain the waterways and boat road

markers in Caddo Lake, will provide \$215,000 to pay for a variety of things, including equipment, wages, herbicides and fuel. Beginning this spring, spray operators will spray herbicide on invasive plants in the lake five days a week.

Beverly Allen, the Caddo Watershed coordinator for the Northeast Texas Municipal Water District, said community involvement in fighting the plant has been tremendous. She said more than 1,500 volunteer hours have been logged with the district by attending planning meetings, scouting for the plants, building and maintaining a two-mile barricade in the lake and informing the public about the dangers of the plants.

Randie Canup of Uncertain, a town on the lake, said she and other people near Caddo Lake were closely following the spread of giant salvinia. She said the quality of the water is a large issue, and that the plant can "wipe out a lake."

"I think we are fighting it as hard as a local community can," Canup said.

Before the lake discussion, a group of environmental law students from the University of Texas at Austin gave a presentation about what land-owners should know about oil and gas development. The students said Harrison County has received a lot of scrutiny from oil and gas companies looking to develop resources. The presentation was designed to educate residents about potential dealings with the companies.

The students discussed regulatory agencies, mineral rights, surface use agreements and possible economic and environmental impacts.