

CVND board approves asking for money already granted institute

[By JULIA ROBB, Special Projects Editor]

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JEFFERSON – Cypress Valley Navigation District board members Monday supported a move by Harrison County commissioners which, if successful, will result in \$400,000 being taken from one Caddo Lake program and being given to them, the CVND.

County commissioners asked Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison in January to urge the federal government to take back grant money it has already given to the Caddo Lake Institute and transfer it to the CVND.

CVND members passed a resolution supporting the county resolution, but did so on a six-three split and only after intense and lengthy debate.

It was also the second vote on the resolution, which lost when board member Vernon Lewis presented it to the board several weeks ago.

Lewis told the board Monday the navigation district could use the money to kill water plants, which are choking the lake and making navigation problematic.

Board member Paul Fortune argued the board should postpone voting on the resolution for two weeks until Caddo Lake Institute President Richard Lowerre could appear before the board and explain what CLI is doing with the grant funds.

He also argued the board had taken one vote and should not go back and vote again.

Lewis, however, charged that some board members, who he did not name, opposed the proposed resolution because they have close ties and benefit financially from the CLI.

Board member Bob Yates said he favored asking for the money because the state had the lake in good shape at one point but then ran out of money and "here we are again, in a quagmire."

But if board members want money to clean out the invasive species, they should apply for their own grant, rather than taking it from other entities, said Marion County board member John Nance.

Lewis argued the board was not attacking the CLI, but simply trying to obtain money to help the lake, an argument echoed by Marion County Board Member Tom Wagner.

Nance also argued the board would not be wise to tell Ms. Hutchison – who helped the CLI get the grant money – she had made a mistake.

I bet she's getting tired of us fussing and feuding down here," Fortune added, a reference to Hutchison's involvement in a recent controversy over a proposed industrial site at the lake, one which would have taken land

from the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

Following the meeting, Lewis said he does not have a problem with the CLI, but is simply attempting to get money to fix the lake's problems.

Nance, Fortune and Tom Walker voted against the resolution. Chair Ken Shaw was not present. Yates, Lewis, Wagner, Ralph Meisenheimer and David Ozee and Martin Clark voted for it.