

Chemical treatments set to start on Caddo

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Spraying of a chemical herbicide on Caddo Lake's water hyacinth problem will begin Monday, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials told local residents last night.

The plan calls for two two-man airboat crews to spray the chemical herbicide 2-4D beginning Monday and lasting through Oct. 31. Officials said each crew can handle 30 acres a day, for a total of 60 for two boats. The plan is written to treat 650 acres of Caddo Lake's estimated 3,000-acre water hyacinth infestation.

Rhandy Helton, who directs Parks and Wildlife spray crews in Texas, said Caddo Lake is in need of treatment.

"This is a severe problem, one that may threaten the life of the lake," Helton said. "It's likely we will need three years of constant treatment to get the lake back in the condition it was in five years ago."

Mike Ryan, a fisheries biologist with Parks and Wildlife, said the plan was specifically formulated to kill water hyacinth.

The chemical sprayed on the water hyacinth will be heavily diluted, Helton said. Parks and Wildlife will mix 1 gallon of 2-4D with 100 gallons of water. Soap will also be added to the solution to help penetrate water hyacinth's wax-coated leaves.

Parks and Wildlife officials will then spray the chemical solution from high-pressure sprayers mounted on airboats. Helton said not much chemical needs to hit the water hyacinth to kill it.

Once sprayed, Helton said the water hyacinth will turn brown within 24 hours. The leaves will shrivel and twist over, indicating death. The dead water hyacinth will then be left to decay and sink to the bottom of the lake.

Spraying will begin on the Johnson's Ranch boat ramp and up through Taylor Island, Helton said. Spraying will then move to Alligator Bayou and along the north and south shores of Caddo Lake.