

TP&W begins using shredder to reduce Caddo hyacinth

By **MATT STIVER**
News Messenger

Texas Parks and Wildlife launched a mechanical shredder onto Caddo Lake Tuesday in an attempt to reduce the growth of water hyacinth.

Officials with Parks and Wildlife and the city of Uncertain said the shredder would be used on a trial basis this week to determine whether it proves an applicable treatment method.

Mike Ryan, district fishing supervisor for Parks and Wildlife, said the shredder would only be used in the Wildlife Management areas of Caddo Lake, away from recreation high traffic areas.

Pending results from the shredder, Parks and Wildlife will make a decision on how to continue treating the hyacinth.

"There's no easy answer," Ryan said. "The shredder is not as controversial, but it is not as efficient in cost benefit. There's a lot for (Parks and Wildlife) to look at. Not only the cost effectiveness, but also how much the shredder will affect water turbidity."

State Sen. Bill Ratliff recently secured funding from Parks and Wildlife for Caddo Lake.

"We're still in the early planning stages," Ryan said. "Everything will depend on the amount of funds available."

The shredder will cost between \$300 and \$700 per acre, officials said.

Other treatment options available to Parks and Wildlife include chemical herbicides and distribution of natural hyacinth predators.

The chemical herbicide, 24D, has been used for 24 years with no reports of injuries, said Phil Durocher, director of inland fisheries for Parks and Wildlife. Treatment with 24D would cost \$20 per acre.

Natural predators, certain types of weevils and fish, could also be introduced. The weevil *Neochetina eichhorniae* has been used successfully in Florida and other areas in the South. Cost estimates on weevils could not be determined, officials said.

Ryan said any final plan by Parks and Wildlife would take

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into ecological concerns into consideration.

Since its introduction to Caddo Lake during the 1950s, water hyacinth has spread rapidly. The plant floats on the water, not needing soil or an anchoring spot on which to attach. When a single piece of hyacinth breaks off, it merely floats away and starts a new colony where ever it lands.

In addition to choking off boat roads, water hyacinth depletes the water of oxygen.

"It turns everything underneath it into a desert," Durocher said.

Over 2,000 acres of Caddo Lake are currently covered with hyacinth.

"This is the worst it's ever been," Joe Griffin, the mayor of Uncertain, said. "We are trying to get the lake back like it was 50 years ago."

Griffin said the shredder would be used to mulch and break up the hyacinth. The pieces of hyacinth would then be picked up by a harvesting machine and transported to shore. The shredded hyacinth would not remain in the lake, Griffin said.

A combination of mechanical, biological and chemical treatments are necessary to fight the plant, he said.

"You can never get rid of

hyacinth, all you can do is try to control it," Griffin said. "Once it's under control, there will be a continuous maintenance problem to keep it that way. There needs to be a master plan."