
Giant salvinia rapidly growing in TX, LA lakes

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Giant salvinia, the invasive species of aquatic weed, is spreading in lakes across Texas, Louisiana and other parts of the South. Louisiana Congressman John Fleming and Texas Congressman Louie Gohmert are joining up with scientists to find a way to save our lakes.

Carpets of giant salvinia covering water bodies can prevent swimming, skiing and fishing. This could happen to Caddo Lake and Lake Bistineau if the fast-growing giant salvinia is not eradicated.

The general growth pattern of the aquatic weed is about two weeks, but because of the warmth and nutrition in area waters, the growth takes about half that time, said Louisiana's 9th District Rep. Henry Burns.

The use of weevils and chemical control to eradicate the giant salvinia is only a temporary fix, officials said. "It's got tiny hairs and the hair actually bifurcates into four different little tinier hairs, and it catches bubbles and that makes it resistant to herbicides," explained Congressman Fleming while on the boat touring Caddo Lake.

Dr. Randy Westbrook, an Invasive Species Prevention Specialist with the U.S. Geological Survey, told us that only one thing can make a difference completely, "if the public gets involved and make sure that their boats are clean."

The giant salvinia can get stuck on boats and boat trailers, so when those boats are taken to other lakes, so is that salvinia.

Fleming said sportsmen can help the process of eradication by properly cleaning their boats, equipment and gear once they bring it out of the water. "Because if you put that back into another body of water, you can actually be metastasizing this problem to other lakes and ponds around the area."

That spreading and growth makes it difficult for fish and other parts of the ecosystem to survive underneath that green carpet of giant salvinia. Getting rid of the aquatic weed is vital for sportsmanship to survive on area lakes.

"What we want to do is collate this data and come together and decide what is the best way to deal with this," said Fleming. "(It) seems, thus far, the use of the weevil is the most cost-effective approach, but none of these will fully-eradicate (giant salvinia); it certainly lowers the growth."