

## The future of Caddo: Hutchison, Henley tout importance of lake

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The importance of ongoing science in the eradication of giant salvinia and other invasive species was in focus Wednesday at Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, who instigated the development of Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension programs to combat these environmental threats, met with other officials at the refuge before touring the lake.

"I've been working on this project for a long time with the friends of Caddo Lake and Don Henley with Caddo Lake Institute," said Sen. Hutchison.

The senator addressed about 50 local stakeholders and recognized all of their efforts as "tough work" and for Texas.

"When giant salvinia visited the lake, it really became about preservation," she said, adding that it was clear a national center for eradication was needed.

Goals of ongoing giant salvinia eradication research are for methods that "do not hurt the natural surroundings."

Sen. Hutchison included that Stephen F. Austin State University has also been working with the plant and has offered encouraging data for giant salvinia "having a use for it to cure cancer."

"I'm proud of the federal part in this and proud to get grants and earmarks for the things I think are important," said Sen. Hutchison, who also praised local legend Don Henley and his role in protecting the lake.

Although key in funding them, this was the first time the senator has been able to



visit the refuge and lake to view positive results of these projects.

"This has truly been a team effort. In these days of polarized partisan politics, Sen. Hutchison continues to be one who can reach across those lines to work with others," said Henley, addressing the group.

Henley spoke after the event on the topic of climate change and the impact of state politics on its science.

"The challenge for the future of this lake will be having enough water in it to keep it healthy," said Henley. "This is the subject of one of the studies."

The ongoing drought has had some benefits for the study, he said, in that it has created additional areas viable to the cypress tree planting program.

"I know a lot of people don't believe in climate change, but there is a consensus now, in the world scientific community, that it's real and it's happening," said Henley.

During the interview, Henley spoke firmly but seemed dismayed.

"If Caddo Lake and other lakes are to survive, if our economy and way of life is to survive," he said. "We are going to have to give more attention and respect to what the world scientific community is trying to tell us."

Sharing the podium to speak in favor of protecting the lake were Harrison County Judge Hugh Taylor and Rick Lowerre, president of Caddo Lake Institute.

"Senator, I hope you will return to Caddo Lake often. You have a lot of friends who will support you," said Lowerre, who spoke to preserving lakes and the economic boon they are to communities that lie along them.

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