

OUR VIEW

The real reason that salvinia is in decline

Here is a spate of good news: When it came time earlier this week to show U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert, who represents Marshall, and U.S. Rep. John Fleming of Louisiana an example of giant salvinia on Caddo Lake, those conducting a tour had trouble finding any.

If you think back just a few years ago and you will remember when salvinia seemed to be threatening the lake's very existence.

The invasive weed was literally everywhere you looked.

But now it isn't. So what happened?

One thing that has happened is the introduction of a tiny weevil that loves to dine on salvinia, the bug that keeps the weed in control in its native South America.

These weevils are small, but they can do a lot of eating for their size.

The word is that they have done a lot to help cut back on the weed and have shown themselves to be more effective than either spraying or harvesting.

Not that those two methods have been abandoned. Giant salvinia is such a threat that it takes all three methods to keep it under control.

Just one would not do. Weevils are great, but they have their problems.

For one thing they cannot survive weather as cold as it usually gets in Marshall during the winters. This means that many years they will have to be re-introduced and that has to be done by humans, which means money spent. If they could be released once then just left to do their work, they might be the perfect solution.

But we aren't complaining. A few years ago nothing looked to be a good answer to stopping giant salvinia. So many different experts were voicing concerns that salvinia could be fatal to the lake that we believed them.

Giving weevils, spraying and harvesting the credit, though is a bit misleading. Actually, it is another development completely that is the most important factor.

That can be summed up in one word: Cooperation within the community.

This progress could never have been made back in the "bad old days" when the city of Marshall was fighting tooth and nail against Caddo Lake interest groups. We went through that mess for far too long, when neither side was willing to compromise, which really meant that both lost. But nothing lost as much as the lake during those years.

Now, with all entities working together for the betterment of Caddo amazing progress is getting made.

Given that many were dissatisfied during that process, we doubt it will go back to those particular problems again. The lessons we learned with Caddo Lake, though, will transfer into many other community activities. After all, if we can come together to control something as tricky as giant salvinia, we can tackle other tricky problems.

And plenty of them abound, each one standing in our way and threatening to slow down our progress.

In the Caddo Lake days, egos were a big problem. Today, that same affliction hurts us in other areas, though it is not nearly as acute.

Marshall has changed much over during the last six years and we predict it will change more for the better in the years ahead. But the road to that will be made much smoother and faster if everyone sets their mind to cooperate with others. In fact, if that were to happen it might even be fun.