

Giant salvinia is driven across Caddo Lake by Friday's storm.

Storm spreads giant salvinia far and wide across Caddo Lake

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The onslaught of rain on Friday wasn't welcomed by everyone, particularly those with the Greater Caddo Lake Association.

Giant salvinia has been a major problem for parts of Caddo Lake and the surrounding areas and Friday's wind and rain only made the problem bigger.

County commissioner William Hatfield, who is also a member of the GCLA and the Caddo Lake Refuge described his visit to the

lake on Sunday as "unreal," after seeing how far it had spread.

"It's just unbelievable, until you really go down there and see what I saw . . . it's unreal," he said.

Winds and rain pushed the giant salvinia to more areas of the lake, including Johnson's Ranch, making it nearly impossible for boats to go through. Giant salvinia is a free floating plant that is an aggressive invader species that destroys habitats for plants, fish, mammals and birds.

GCLA recently held their annual fundraiser at the beginning of the month and raised \$11,000 to go toward Caddo Lake Giant Salvinia Control Effort. Daren Horton who's on the Giant Salvinia Action Committee, said he was surprised at how much money was raised.

"We usually get a couple of thousand, but this was a tremendous success," he said.

The committee was created to have a tunnel vision on the weevil project and get the hatchery up and running. Horton said though they're still in the beginning stages, they're making progress.

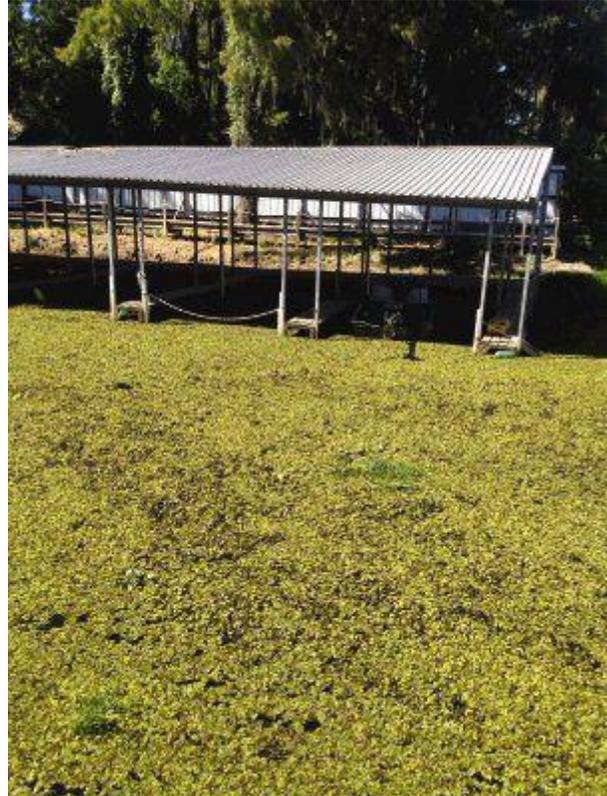
"We're still in our infancy, we still don't know what this is going to turn into, but the public showed up (at the fundraiser) and we made a lot of money so we have tunnel vision on making the weevil hatchery on the lake a reality as soon as possible," he said.

They hope to have everything up and running by next spring or summer. Thirty thousand dollars is needed to make the hatchery a reality. In the meantime, Horton said he was hoping for a strong winter to help slow the growth of the salvinia.

"I hope we have a strong winter because it will at least slow the salvinia down over the winter while we have time to get our plan together."

Hatfield said he thinks the weevil program will be the solution to what they're currently facing.

"We need help and it looks like this weevil program is going to be the answer," he said. "It's just unbelievable, it's just a mess and we've got to get people's attention."



Some parts of Caddo lake that were relatively unaffected by giant salvinia are now nearly impassible.