

Salvinia weevil facility set for Caddo Lake

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(Photo: Submitted photo)

Officials in Texas and Louisiana will celebrate the opening of the Morley Hudson Weevil Greenhouse at Caddo Lake during a 10 a.m. ceremony Wednesday in Uncertain, Texas.

The high production facility will develop salvinia weevils to help control the invasive species on Caddo Lake. Wednesday's event marks the end of the first phase of the Greater Caddo Lake Association's program to develop a Biocontrol-based management program for the fishery. The ceremony will take place at Shady Glade Resort, located at 429 Cypress Drive in Uncertain. Researchers at Texas A&M have established that the weevil is a "highly effective" control agent for the noxious, invasive aquatic plant.

Among those expected to attend the opening are representatives from the Caddo Lake Institute, Texas Parks & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Interagency Giant Salvinia Control Team.

Salvinia continues to be a major problem on both Caddo Lake and Lake Bistineau. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries recently announced a drawdown of Bistineau to help control the weed, which continues to expand in waterways across the southern United States.

According to a release from the GCLA, the salvinia weevil is a one-tenth-inch long insect that feeds and reproduces exclusively on salvinia helping reduce populations to acceptable levels. According to entomologist Lee Eisenberg, the lead scientist at the new facility, "there is no place in the world where giant salvinia is being controlled without salvinia weevils."

"With our floor plan, we will be able to produce a large number of salvinia weevils and get them out on the lake early in the growing season," Eisenberg said in the release. "By carefully selecting release sites, we will be able to document just how effective our approach is, and generate the kind of support we need to make this effort a sustainable one."

The greenhouse will allow workers to harvest weevils year-round. The project has been funded by grants from a number of individuals and organizations dedicated to Caddo Lake and its wetlands. The greenhouse is named after the late Morley Hudson, whose family contributed financially to the project. Hudson lived on Caddo Lake for many years and was an ardent defender of the lake's environmental and ecological resources.

Volunteer teams have completed the greenhouse construction and have begun raising the initial crop of weevils under the supervision of Eisenberg. According to GCLA President Daren Horton, the immediate goal is "to release as many weevils as possible in selected areas of the lake as soon as possible."

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