



## Caddo Lake meeting to cover invasive species dog detection pilot program

By KATE ARCHER KENT · FEB 1, 2016

A consortium of groups working to protect Caddo Lake – the Caddo Lake Clearinghouse -- will hold a community meeting Tuesday in Karnack, Texas, to discuss conservation and restoration efforts in the watershed.



Painter Ron Atwood's "Mossy Break" print will be raffled off at Tuesday's meeting.

The meeting is an annual event coinciding with World Wetlands Day.

The agenda is loaded with items that weigh heavily on the lake -- from the ongoing introduction of paddlefish to the control of the invasive aquatic plant giant salvinia by using weed eating weevils, according to Caddo Lake Institute executive director Rick Lowerre.

Lowerre says a new project with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will use specially-trained dogs that sniff out invasive species -- even invisible ones to the human eye, like zebra mussel larvae.

“As a boat comes up to a ramp to pull out, the dog could be there and could give it the all clear or we have a problem let’s wash this down. We help to stop the spread of invasive species that really get spread on boats and trailers,” Lowerre said.

Texas partnered on this experiment with Bozeman, Montana-based [Working Dogs for Conservation](#). Executive director Pete Coppolillo says his organization trains rescue dogs for a variety of missions worldwide and has a growing business in rooting out invasive species. He

says there are several advantages for using dogs to detect these pests -- they're fast, friendly and thorough.

"For things like inspecting boats or doing anti-trafficking work in Africa inspecting vehicles for ivory or rhino horn, it takes a person searching up to an hour to inspect a vehicle. Same goes for a visual inspection of a boat. But a dog can do a boat or a vehicle in three or four minutes," Coppolillo said, adding the dogs are trained in passive response – lying down and making eye contact with their handler – when they find something suspicious.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is slated to roll out a Caddo Lake boat inspection experiment with a dog in May, according to Lowerre.

"The expense of having a dog and a handler at all boat ramps is too much. But, it's good for education. It gets people to realize that these invasive species can travel easily on your boat when you can't even see it or you might miss it," Lowerre said.

The meeting will conclude with a [raffle drawing](#) of Shreveport painter Ron Atwood's giclée print "Mossy Break," a signature cypress-forest view of Caddo Lake.

The meeting is set for Tuesday, Feb. 2, at 6 p.m. at the Karnack Community Center, intersection of FM 134 and T.J. Taylor Ave. Raffle proceeds will benefit a weevil growing greenhouse, the Morley Hudson Weevil Greenhouse. The winner need not be present to win.

In 1993, Caddo Lake became the 13th U.S. site to be designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The designation includes approximately 20,000 acres of wetlands traversing private, state and federal lands.