MINDEN
PRESS-HERALD
www.press-herald.com

Fundraiser for Lake Bistineau is this weekend

By **Michelle Bates** - Sep 24, 2015

A fish fry fundraiser for Lake Bistineau that will help in the fight against giant salvinia is Saturday.

The purpose of the fundraiser is to help defray the cost of raising weevils, the only known predator against giant salvinia. The money will be used for supplies such as Berlese funnels and other items. It will also help pay for an entomologist, an insect professional.

The fish fry will begin at 1 p.m., at Our Place Bar and Grill, located at 300 Cryers Camp Road. in Elm Grove. Fish plates will be $8, and the fundraiser will include a live auction, silent bake auction, a 50/50 cash giveaway, raffle, door prizes, fun, games and entertainment.

Weldon P. Thomas, the founder of the Lake Bistineau News community, says the excitement has been overwhelming.

"The support the community has shown is amazing with cash donations and through our

GoFundMe account," he said. "We have thousands of dollars worth of items donated to the auction."

Just a few of the items include a custom made LSU crawfish table, an LSU lifeguard poolside chair, and LSU wood ice chest, a large Budweiser crawfish pot, Yeti cups, guitar, custom made duck call, rib-eye steaks, porch swings and much more.

Door prizes include $50 gift cards from Bass Pro Shops, gift cards from Johnny's Pizza House, Nicky's Mexican Restaurant, Bodacious Barbecue and $50 Visa gift cards. Also included are caps, t-shirts, grab bags from Barksdale Federal Credit Union and more.

Entertainment for the afternoon will be Floyd Grigsby and the 5GK band. The silent bake auction already has more than 100 items to auction off.

Candidates for various offices will also be on hand to answer questions, Thomas said, as well as a booth for the purpose of the fundraiser.

"Pete Camp will have a booth with experts showing live weevils and what they do to salvinia," Thomas said.

"This is what the fundraiser is all about, to support the raising and releasing of weevils into Bistineau. They only eat salvinia and then they will die."

The Red River Waterway Commission donated roughly 36,000 weevils that were transported to Lake Bistineau by members of the Bistineau Task Force and deposited into areas cordoned off with booms. One of these areas is Camp's Bistineau camp, a member at large of the Bistineau Task Force.

There are currently three test areas at the camp where weevils were introduced: one with just weevils, one with salvinia, weevils, larvae and eggs and the control group which has no weevils.

Jeff Sibley, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologist supervisor for inland fisheries district 1, says while they have nothing to do with the fundraiser, they are working in cooperation with the Bistineau Task Force to find ways to combat the invasive aquatic weed.

"We've had an ongoing weevil project since 2007," Sibley said. "We've helped and provided them (BTF) weevils along with the Red River Waterway Commission. We've got five different colonies established on the lake right now. We don't spray directly in the area where the weevils are, but we've been stocking weevils on the lake since 2007, and we've stocked nearly three million weevils in that time period."

He says the herbicides won't kill the weevils, but it's counterproductive to spray in the weevil area, because spraying kills the food the weevils eat – the salvinia.

"The areas are being closely monitored, but we've had limited success," he said, adding it's mainly due to the temperate climate of Louisiana.

The problem is, he says, the weevils don't survive extreme temperatures, like extreme heat or extreme cold, and the winters from the last few years have been cold. The weevil numbers drastically decreased because of that.

A news release by Trailblazer in June, reports the purpose of the BTF project is to test the effectiveness of the salvinia weevil on Lake Bistineau.

LDWF biologists have tried numerous avenues to eradicate the salvinia but its eradication has proven unsuccessful because of salvinia's rapid growth rate. To date, herbicdes and the weevil project, along with lake draw downs, have proven to knock it back, but it is an ongoing fight.