

Agreement Between Caddo Lake Coalition & City of Marshall Ends Long Running Dispute Over Water Permit Change

December 11, 2008, the Marshall City Commissioners voted unanimously to approve a settlement agreement that resolved all issues between the city and the Caddo Lake Coalition that were pending before the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality following a seven-year legal battle that went all the way to the State Supreme Court.

The Caddo Lake Coalition consists of The GCLA of Texas, the City of Uncertain, the Caddo Lake Chamber of Commerce, and the Caddo Lake Institute.

Under the terms of the agreement, Marshall is withdrawing its application to amend its long-established permit to withdraw water from Big Cypress for municipal purposes to allow the city to sell raw water for industrial use. The amendment was the principal issue in contention between the city and the coalition. Marshall contended it needed the flexibility to provide untreated water to attract economic development. The Coalition believed that approval of the change to the permit could result in dramatic increases in withdrawals, reducing Big Cypress flows into the lake during critical dry periods. It was the coalition's position that the city had other, more appropriate ways to provide untreated water to any customers who required it.

Resolution of the permit issue was made possible when the city recently secured the availability of industrial raw water from Lake of the Pines through the Northeast TX Municipal Water District and received approval from TCEQ, without objection from coalition members, to distribute the water in the Sabine Basin as well as the Cypress Basin.

The city and the coalition also reached an agreement that resolves the question of whether water being discharged from the city's wastewater treatment plant is required to be returned to the Cypress Basin.

The coalition was represented in negotiations by GCLA of Texas President Doug Parker, Uncertain Mayor Sam Canup, Caddo Chamber President Terry Coleman, and Caddo Lake Institute President Rick Lowerre.

Lowerre also praised City Commission Chairman William "Buddy" Power, the other commissioners, City Attorney Todd Fitts, and city staff for their hard work and determination to make this settlement possible.

"This is a landmark agreement, one that shows that it is possible to find ways to meet all of the needs for water in the region," Lowerre said. "This agreement proves that, when people with different perspectives and goals work together, they can find solutions that balance their needs."

CADDO VEGETATION CONTROL WRAP UP FOR 2008

First GCLA then CVND have been spraying Water Hyacinth and Giant Salvinia for the last several years. GCLA started with a paddle wheel boat and small spray rig that was geared towards Water Hyacinth control... Salvinia had not reared its ugly head at that time. But with the discovery of Salvinia Molesta in Jeems Bayou, we immediately knew we were in for a long, hard fight. Many volunteers spent hour upon hour on the lake picking up and disposing of the salvinia, but the monster just kept coming. CVND starting spraying with two small rigs and in April of 2008 received a surplus airboat from Texas Parks and Wildlife. This boat was fitted with the latest spray equipment, had a new engine installed and operators were hired. On May 26, 2008 the spraying started. The airboat can spray up to 65 acres a day compared to 2-4 acres a day with the small rigs! Operators sprayed steadily until late November 2008, during that time the operators were spraying both hyacinth and salvinia. The numbers are quite impressive;

- 511 hours on airboat since May 26, 2008
- 2880 total acres sprayed consisting of:
1855 acres of Water Hyacinth and 1025 acres of Giant Salvinia sprayed
- 62% reduction in the amount of Water Hyacinth observed on the lake. (from the TPWD annual survey in August 2008 as compared to the same survey in 2007)

Areas of the lake that had been virtually unusable in 2007 are now open. Places like Turtle Shell, Hog Wallow, and Stumpy Slough have all been sprayed and the majority of Water Hyacinth has been killed. The north shore folks from Holland's Camp to the back of Ames Spring also received some much needed relief from the water hyacinth that had left them without access to the lake for years. Although free of hyacinth, the Salvinia has really come on in these areas. CVND plans to continue spraying both plants this year, starting as early in the spring as possible and spraying until the last possible day in early winter.

CVND RECEIVES \$40,000 USFWS GRANT FOR INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANT CONTROL

For the second consecutive year, the U S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has provided the Cypress Valley Navigation District (CVND) with a grant of \$40,000 for use in the ongoing battle against invasive aquatic plants on Caddo Lake. The first grant, provided in late 2007, was used for various activities, including spray equipment, labor and chemicals. The current grant provided in late 2008, will be used principally for labor and chemical expenses. The grant is a result of efforts by Mark Williams, Refuge Manager for the Caddo Lake Wildlife Refuge. Mark's continued support and involvement in lake and refuge activities include providing direct contact with the USFWS for support of local needs.

Matching funds of equal amounts are required for receiving these type grants. These funds are managed by the Northeast Texas Municipal Water District (NETMWD). They include other donations and local volunteer efforts for the control of these plants. These local efforts are provided by many local organizations and individuals, and are consolidated and managed by

NETMWD for matching funds purposes. The Caddo Lake Watershed Protection Program Coordinator, Lee Thomas, manages these funds.

CVND continues to be the primary organization for fighting invasive plants, including water hyacinths and more importantly, giant salvinia. Giant salvinia, first discovered on the Louisiana side of Caddo Lake in June, 2006, infests many areas on the Texas side, with acreage estimates now over 1,000 acres. Giant salvinia, labeled the "world's worst aquatic plant," doubles in size in a week to ten days, is cold resistant, and crowds out all forms of life, both flora and fauna. This floating fern is a world-wide problem which has no permanent solution. Caddo Lake has been described as the perfect incubator for giant salvinia. It threatens the survival of Caddo Lake, as well as all the tourism, sports activities and economy of the lake and surrounding communities.

"As grant funds become available, continued development of matching funds is a necessity," says CVND Chairman, Ken Shaw. "Donations of time and money are both critical to being able to match and receive grants like this grant from the USFWS."

Mechanical Removal of Invasive Vegetation Test Planned For Caddo Lake Spring, 2009

For the first time in many years, aquatic vegetation harvesting equipment will enter the waters at Caddo Lake to test whether mechanical removal of invasive weeds can play an effective role in controlling invasive plants in Caddo's uniquely shallow and stumpy environment. The trial will primarily target giant salvinia.

A non-profit organization has been established by shoreline property owner John Sanders and Marshall City Commission Chairman William "Buddy" Power that is raising funds to pay for a 14 day mechanical removal trial between March and June of this year. The project will be coordinated by GCLA board member and Caddo Lake Institute outreach director Jack Canson.

Sanders is a Marshall native in the oil & gas services business in Kansas. He owns a home and lakefront property at Buzzard's Bay near the state line, an area that has been heavily infested with giant salvinia and water hyacinth for the past 18 months. When Sanders approached longtime friend Buddy Power about his ideas for mechanical removal, the idea for a comprehensive field test was developed.

Crews and equipment will be provided by the Aquamarine Division of Electroweld, Inc., a Canadian company that has extensive experience in Florida. It will be the company's first effort to remove giant salvinia. Sanders and Power made a three-day field trip to Tampa, Florida in early December last year to observe weed removal operations conducted by Aquamarine and negotiated the upcoming test at Caddo Lake.

The project has received verbal approval from Texas Parks & Wildlife officials. A formal Treatment Proposal is being prepared and will be submitted to both TPW and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries. It is anticipated that during the trial operations will be conducted on both sides of the state line.

According to Canson, volunteers will be needed to help record observations and measurements during the 14 day test period. As soon as an operating plan has been developed, community meetings will be conducted to explain the planned trial and seek assistance.

“This will be the first step in the direction of what we hope will be an effective new tool in bringing giant salvinia and water hyacinth under control at Caddo,” said Canson. “We will never replace the need for herbicides in weed control at the lake. We will need all the tools – containment, biocontrols, and mechanical removal as well as herbicide. Mechanical removal poses many challenges at Caddo Lake, but until we try a variety of options and develop some hands-on experience with modern and Caddo-adapted systems, we will never know whether those obstacles can be overcome.”

More information on the mechanical removal trial will be posted on www.caddolakenews.net and via newsletter soon.

Below are photos of some of the equipment that will be used in the trial.



