



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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TPWD and GBRA promote biological control as part of balanced aquatic plant treatment program

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SEGUIN-The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) recently released 1,000 water lettuce weevils in the Clear Creek area of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority's H-4 reservoir near Gonzales to help reduce the growth and spread of water lettuce, an exotic aquatic plant that can cause serious access problems.

The weevils were purchased and stocked by TPWD as part of the TPWD/GBRA integrated approach to managing exotic nuisance aquatic plants in the Guadalupe River system.

According to TPWD fisheries biologist Mike Reed, the H-4 reservoir stocking is part of a planned program that will introduce additional insects during the next few weeks to help reduce the extensive water lettuce infestation at the lake.

Reed said lettuce weevils are tiny insects that feed exclusively on water lettuce, an exotic floating aquatic plant found from Florida to Texas. Water lettuce grows rapidly because there are no native insects or pathogens to limit its spread. The plant forms dense mats that reduce and may even prevent fishing, swimming, boating and other water uses.

Water lettuce has been found throughout the Guadalupe River chain of hydro lakes since the early 1990's when it was first identified in large amounts at Lake Dunlap. At that time, TPWD introduced a weevil population into the lake. Within 18 months, the insects dramatically reduced the amount of water lettuce, eliminated the water access problems, and have continued to maintain a significant level of plant control at Lake Dunlap.

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TPWD/GBRA promote biological aquatic plant treatment
Page 2 of 2
June 19, 1998

According to Reed, TPWD and GBRA strongly support the use of natural methods of vegetation control whenever possible as an alternative to the use of more costly aquatic herbicides and other treatment methods.

Despite the success at Lake Dunlap, water lettuce continues to spread. In early 1997, enough infestation was found in the Dead Man's Creek area of Lake Placid to pose a potential access problem to the creek. In November, 1997, three hundred adult water lettuce weevils were stocked in an attempt to reduce plant growth and spread. The site is currently being monitored by TPWD to determine the overall impact of the weevils.

If the current stockings are as successful as previous introductions made at Lake Dunlap, Lake Corpus Christi and Town Resaca in Brownsville the insects should begin to have a noticeable impact on the plants by Fall, 1998.

For more information on the use of insect biological control of exotic aquatic plants in the Guadalupe River basin, contact Mike Reed, TPWD, P.O. Box 116, Mathis, TX 78368 at (512) 547-9712 or email to ifdist.le@internetmci.com, or Debbie Magin, GBRA regional laboratory director, 933 East Court Street, Seguin, TX 78155 at (830) 379-5822 or email to dmagin@gbra.org.