

Noxious Weed Threatens Cameron Parish

By Marilyn Barrett



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN CHANEY, LSU AG CENTER

Common Salvinia (left) is as difficult to control as Giant Salvinia in Cameron Parish.

Cameron Parish landowners have been discussing strategies to prevent further spread of a noxious plant, recently observed building up against floodgates near the town of Cameron. Giant Salvinia, an invasive plant that lives on the surface of freshwater lakes and ponds, threatened Toledo Bend over a year ago. It now threatens Cameron drainage and irrigation systems for rice fields, according to Kevin Savoie, Sea Grant Extension agent with the LSU Agricultural Center. The plant can also damage exteriors and clog intakes of outboard motors. Because Giant Salvinia can be spread accidentally on recreational boats and boat trailers, officials are asking duck hunters and recreational boaters to clean all plant debris from boats, trailers and outboard motors before moving from one launch site to another. Posters developed by Louisiana Sea Grant and the LSU Agricultural Center have been placed at boat ramps to remind sportsmen of the problem.

PROTECT YOUR BOAT AND LOUISIANA'S WATERS

Slow the spread of non-native aquatic invaders that:

- Choke waterways
- Foul boats and engines
- Clog intake pipes

These plants become nuisances when they multiply in Louisiana's waters. Avoid accidentally spreading them to other lakes and streams by taking the following precautions after boating.

INSPECT boat and trailer carefully for any living matter. **REMOVE** all plants or other living organisms. Discard in the trash, not in the water.

DRAIN all water from boat, including bilge, live-well, and cooling system to avoid transporting small seeds or spores.

DRY boat and trailer in the sun for at least two days to kill plants. **OR RINSE** all boat and trailer, anchor, and/or chain - all boat parts - with tap water.




Giant Salvinia



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The rapid spread of this noxious plant in Cameron was probably caused by a combination of angling, duck hunting, and the summer movement of alligators, according to Charlie Dugas of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. He gave information to landowners about the plant and the best available control methods. Although the earlier Toledo Bend Giant Salvinia infestation had been almost destroyed by a combination of herbicidal spray and cold winter weather, the new infestation in Cameron Parish is much larger and denser. No one expected new rapid growth in another watershed. "We knew that Giant Salvinia could eventually spread naturally to other parishes from the Toledo Bend area, but we had it under control there and Cameron is a separate watershed," said Dugas.

Giant Salvinia reproduces quickly, forming tight mats that block sunlight and eventually reduce dissolved oxygen needed by fish and aquatic plants. According to Dugas, the result can be ecological and economic destruction. Once the plant takes over a lake or bayou, changes may occur that make the site unsuitable for game fish and waterfowl, and ultimately, anglers and hunters.

LDWF field crews will soon begin spraying in Cameron and landowners agreed to work together over the long term to control the plant on private property. "If all of the hunters and boaters will also help us by cleaning their boats and trailers after each use, we can control the plant in the parish," Savoie concluded. 



In Cameron Parish, Salvinia built up against the flood control gates in the town of Cameron to a depth of several feet. It formed such a thick mat that this man was able to stand on the floating mass without sinking into the water.

