Plan devised to manage hydrilla in Henderson Lake

By JONAS BREAUX
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HENDERSON — Last spring, Henderson Lake got a strong dose of medicine to help break the choke-hold the aquatic plant hydrilla had on the popular Acadiana fishing hole.

State Sen. Craig Romero, R-New Iberia, pushed a measure through the Legislature which provided $1 million for herbicide application on the 55,000-acre body of water.

Hydrilla, which grows from the bottom of the lake, sends long shoots up through the water column until they reach the top. Once the plant reaches the water surface it begins to spread — eventually forming a mat of thick vegetation that's impossible for boats to navigate through.

"With the amount of kill (from this summer's spraying) we've got a real good handle on (the hydrilla) problem now," Romero said.

"Now we need to establish a management plan for the lake."

Romero said of the $1 million allocated for the herbicide application only $850,000 was used this summer.

"I had some people ask what we should do with the remaining $150,000," Romero said. "I told them we were going to need the money for future (hydrilla) management.

"That's why we set up a fund with the $150,000 to use for hotspots that might crop up this spring," he said. "I also think it is important to keep the LSU Agriculture Center and other state universities involved in fighting hydrilla and other problem aquatic plants."

Romero said he would be meeting with St. Martin Parish President Scott Angelle to discuss setting up a management board for the lake.

"It's my understanding that (Angelle) has some kind of lake board already in place," Romero said. "But, we're going to talk more about how the board will function and maybe other ways to keep the hydrilla problem under control."

Romero said he is not opposed to possibly setting up an annual user fee for the lake, with moneys from the fees going to hydrilla management.

"A lot of people do that (establish user fees)," he said. "For the most part, these types of programs work pretty well. Letting the people that utilize the lake (help with management costs) is not all bad."