



Parish of Ascension

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TOMMY MARTINEZ
Parish President

Lamar-Dixon Pond Stocked With Vegetation Maintenance Fish

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GONZALES – Ascension Parish President Tommy Martinez announced Wednesday state biologists stocked one of Lamar-Dixon Expo Center’s fishing ponds last week with vegetation eating fish to help thin out submerged growth.

Brian Heimann, a biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Inland Fisheries Division, said 55 triploid grass carp were introduced into the 11.4-acre pond. He said triploid fish do not reproduce.

“What we’re after is access for people to fish from the bank,” Heimann said. “If it gets so thick at the banks, you can’t fish effectively so that’s where the grass carp will come in.

Heimann said the fish were provided free of charge through a “memorandum of understanding” between LDWF and Ascension Parish because Lamar-Dixon’s two ponds provide access for public fishing.

“This pond stays really clear most of the year so submerged vegetation gets to be a problem during the summer months,” Heimann said. “The grass carp love to feed on the type of vegetation that’s in here like coontail and southern naiad.”

Heimann said coontail is classified as a submerged aquatic species that is a free-floating, rootless, perennial native aquatic plant. Coontail is capable of forming dense colonies covering large areas of water.

He said southern naiad is an annual plant that branches out freely and forms dense stands of rooted submerged vegetation.

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Heimann said grass carp that are caught must be released back into the pond because they are illegal to possess either alive or dead, according to state regulations.

“They are here for a specific purpose,” he said.

Tim Guillory, a LDWF technician who assisted with transporting the fish, said the grass carp were hatched in Arkansas and brought to the statewide hatchery Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery in Forest Hill, Louisiana before making their way to Lamar-Dixon. Guillory said the fish range in size from 16 to 18 inches.

“With a fish that size, they’re already going to get to work,” Heimann said. “There’s already a good forage base for them with the vegetation that’s already present in the pond.”

Heimann said catfish will be stocked in the two fishing ponds at Lamar-Dixon, probably in the early fall. The other pond is a four-acre pond. He said the catfish will range from six to eight inches.

Heimann said he came out to Lamar-Dixon and “electrofished” the larger pond about a month and a half ago to monitor fish species and sizes.

According to Heimann, electrofishing involves using electricity to stun fish before they are caught. Electrofishing is a common scientific survey method used to sample fish populations to determine length, weight, abundance, density and species composition. When performed correctly, electrofishing results in no permanent harm to fish, which return to their natural state in as little as two minutes after being stunned.

“When we electrofished the pond, it actually looked great,” Heimann said. “It had a healthy population of bass, a lot of bluegill and a lot of available forage for those bass to eat.

Based on the numbers of fish that Heimann documented, he decided to limit over-abundant vegetative growth and place artificial structures in the pond.

“The structures can be made out of old milk crates, PVC reefs or cinder block,” Heimann said. “What we want is something along the shoreline where kids and families can come out and target the reefs because the fish will be attracted to those areas with forage. We think they will get a better chance of catching a fish that they can keep.”

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Brian Heimann (right), a biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, is shown releasing triploid grass carp into Lamar-Dixon Expo Center's 11.4-acre fishing pond. Heimann said the grass carp species will prevent vegetation in the pond from over-producing. Lamar-Dixon Expo Center Sales and Marketing Manager Garney Gautreau (left) and Ascension Parish Department of Recreation and Culture Supervisor Lyle Schexnadre are shown looking on.

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