



PRESS CONTACT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPDATE ON GIANT SALVINIA AT BIG CREEK LAKE

MOBILE, September 24, 2021-- MAWSS continues efforts to eradicate and contain the Giant Salvinia at Big Creek Lake discovered six weeks ago. Giant Salvinia is a highly invasive species of aquatic plants. A single plant can grow to an acre in size in three months. These plants usually grow in thick mats along the shoreline and cause ecological problems, increase treatment costs, and cause costly equipment repairs.

“We are calling on everyone to be informed, vigilant, and responsible on preventing the spread of this and any invasive species at Big Creek Lake,” says Monica Allen, Public Relations Manager at Mobile Area Water & Sewer System.

Last week, our board approved the emergency expenditure of \$122,739 for herbicide treatments and containment equipment due to the Giant Sylvania outbreak at Big Creek Lake. The herbicides being used are Penoxsulam and Flumioxazin, and Methylated Seed Oils (MSO), as the surfactant.

MAWSS is spraying around 100 acres of Big Creek Lake weekly to eliminate the Giant Salvinia found there. The application of these herbicides has been permitted by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) for use in water sources, meaning water from Big Creek Lake is safe to drink. MAWSS uses mechanical measures as well. Large booms contain the plants to keep them isolated and stop them from drifting to other areas.

The spores of Giant Salvinia are inactive in the plants found in the United States. They cannot spread in that manner according to the experts that we have been working with. Giant Salvinia is found in 24 watersheds in Alabama, Texas, California, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida.

Currently, the lake is still closed to boaters to prevent the further spread of the floating fern. That is likely the method the plant used for transportation into Big Creek Lake. “We hope to re-open the lake when we are able - nothing is off the table when it comes to ensuring water quality. The situation could change as we move forward,” according to MAWSS Water & Sewer Director Bud McCrory. “Our goal is to re-open the lake. We will advise boat owners of the steps to take at that time to responsibly use the lake to ensure that this plant does not spread to other bodies of water or re-contaminate Big Creek Lake. New regulations including boat washing mandates and other safeguards will be put in place. We do not have a timeline at this point for re-opening as eliminating invasive aquatic species is one of the most challenging conservation tasks performed.”

It is important to remember that Big Creek Lake is the primary drinking water source for 200,000 people in our community. "Water quality is our highest priority during this process and at all times, says Allen. MAWSS will provide frequent updates to the public as the situation warrants.

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ABOUT MAWSS

MAWSS is committed to protecting and enhancing our community's health, safety, and economic well-being through responsible management of water services while providing superior customer service. Since 1954, we have worked hard to enrich our community by protecting and creating resources for future generations.