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Charlotte A. Randolph, Parish President

PRESS RELEASE

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**Lafourche Parish Government works to control
Bayou Lafourche water hyacinth problem**

(Mathews, La.) -- Parish officials are developing a strategy to control a Bayou Lafourche problem that plagues recreational boaters, commercial fishermen, the shipping industry, the area's drinking water supply and hatches large swarms of mosquitoes, Lafourche Parish Government Director of Public Works Kerry Babin said today.

"Our options are limited," Babin said. "But doing nothing is not an option."

The Administration and 7th District Councilman Phillip Gouaux are working closely with the Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District to control the growth of water hyacinth plants in the bayou.

"The efforts will include very controlled spraying with approved herbicides by certified applicators," Babin said. "Breaking up heavy concentrations of lilies and allowing them to flow southward when currents are favorable would also help alleviate the problem."

"All of these efforts are necessary to get ahead of the expected rapid growth and expansion of these lily packs along the bayou as temperatures rise," Parish President Charlotte Randolph said. "The mild winter of 2011 did nothing to slow the lily growth."

"This and other invasive plants restrict the fresh water flow in the bayou, which is vital to our health." Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District Chairman Hugh F. Caffery said.

According to Texas AgriLife Extension Service, water hyacinth - or *Eichhorcia crassipes*, - is a free-floating perennial plant that can grow to a height of 3 feet. The service says "water hyacinth is a very aggressive invader and can form thick mats. If these mats cover the entire surface of the pond they can cause oxygen depletions and fish kills."

Currently the worst accumulation is located near the Valentine Pontoon Bridge Bridge between Larose and Lockport, where the water plants have built up and formed a choke point because they cannot flow south.

Parish officials said if the bridge is kept open at night, the plants can then flow down the bayou and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico.

"If we get rid of the water lilies it not only helps the water flow in the bayou, but it also improves fresh water introduction to the estuaries in southern Lafourche," Parish Coastal Zone Management Administrator Archie Chiasson said

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