

Eurasian Watermilfoil Decline in Devil's Lake

Small-Scale Lake Planning Grant Study

Sponsored by
The Friends of Devil's Lake State Park



1988 Eurasian watermilfoil bed in Devil's Lake

In 2008 The Friends of Devil's Lake State Park was awarded a small-scale lake planning grant to conduct qualitative EWM surveys within the three littoral (shallow water) zones of Devil's Lake. Surveys demonstrated that the EWM decline in Devil's Lake is probably more extensive than any other lake in Wisconsin and perhaps the mid-west. The decline had occurred with minimal management and largely reflects that natural ecological factors can prevail if disturbances do not support the EWM niche. These findings suggest that the best approach for managing Devil's Lake macrophytes is a passive approach. Periodic surveys of the littoral zone communities should continue with the option of rapid response eradication efforts if EWM or other invasives expand in the lake.

In an effort to sustain the ecologically balanced aquatic plant communities and their ecological functions in Devil's Lake, the following steps are recommended.

1. Volunteer boat operators and SCUBA divers should revisit the EWM sites in June 2010 to determine the status of the beds and conduct a small-scale harvesting effort. Wet weight measurements should be made to establish a biomass baseline for future assessments.
2. The Friends of Devil's Lake State Park and Park staff should encourage volunteer boat inspectors who can also share information why it is important to prevent new invasive plants or animals from entering Devil's Lake. An Aquatic Invasive Species grant may be an option for this effort - <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/lakes/grants/>.
3. Encourage local SCUBA divers to become familiar with EWM and other potential invasives. Informed SCUBA divers could alert Park staff if exotic species are observed or photographed.
4. Littoral zones in Devil's Lake appear to have rejuvenated following the EWM decline. A passive approach to managing aquatic plant communities in the lake is recommended and aggressive management techniques such as chemical applications or large-scale mechanical harvesting are not warranted.



Bluegill in fern pondweed (*Potamogeton robbinsii*) bed