

Eurasian Watermilfoil

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Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) is a submergent (growing underwater to water surface) aquatic plant that has caused many problems on a large number of Wisconsin Lakes in recent years. This plant is an exotic species (not found in Wisconsin), native to Europe, Asia and northern Africa. Aquatic biologists know this plant as, *Myriophyllum spicatum*, a cousin to northern watermilfoil, which is native to Wisconsin. Most aquatic plants are beneficial to the health of a lake providing food and habitat for many creatures using the lake including fish, frogs, and insects. EWM, however is an invasive aquatic plant with aggressive growth habits. This plant can grow to nuisance levels and cause problems for navigation and recreation.

EWM was introduced to the United States by early European settlers and since has proliferated in waterways across North America. EWM was first detected in Wisconsin lakes during the 1960's. Since then, it has significantly expanded its range to about 380 lakes in 59 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. The range of EWM continues to expand in Wisconsin. Because of its potential for explosive growth and its incredible ability to regenerate, EWM can successfully out compete most native aquatic plants, especially in disturbed areas. EWM does not rely on seed for primary reproduction. Rather its fragments can reproduce, forming a new plant. This reproductive method allows it to disperse over long distances. These fragments may then be carried by wind and water currents to other areas of a lake. Furthermore, boats, motors, trailers, bilges, live wells, or bait buckets can transport the plant to other lakes.

In 2002, EWM was identified on Legend Lake. The Legend Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (the District), with support from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (the DNR), the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin (the Tribe), and the Menominee County Land Conservation Department took steps to identify the extent of the EWM problem on Legend Lake. The District then hired an environmental consultant to survey and map the extent of EWM on Legend Lake. The survey identified EWM on over 150 acres of Legend Lake. Since the discovery of EWM, the District has been receiving numerous complaints from lake users about its thick mats impeding navigation. This trend is evidence that EWM can spread quickly and cause navigational and recreational problems.

The District received a state grant and is in the process of developing an Aquatic Plant Management Plan (APM Plan). An APM Plan is needed to manage EWM and other aquatics on Legend Lake. Furthermore, in order to operate aquatic plant harvesters in Wisconsin, a permit is needed from the DNR. The permit now requires the completion of an APM Plan. Harvesting alone will not benefit the EWM infestation. In fact, if done improperly, it can actually accelerate a problem by creating fragments that are carried by the wind and water currents. The District is developing guidelines for harvesting operators to minimize fragments of plant material that cannot be collected. The District and the environmental consultant reviewed the available technologies for EWM control and selected chemical treatment with an aquatic herbicide as a management option. The District received a second state grant for the 2004 chemical treatment. The herbicide to be used is sold under the trade name *Navigate*®. The active ingredient of this herbicide is 2,4-Dichlorophenoxy acetic acid (1,2 DCA). 1,2-DCA has been used as a terrestrial herbicide for years. In the aquatic realm, *Navigate*® is selective for watermilfoil and does not harm the native aquatic plant community when applied according to label rates. The application also must not adversely affect DNR-designated sensitive areas (areas designated as having important ecological importance).

The treatment is designed to target the most dense areas of EWM found during 2003. Treating all areas is not feasible at this time due to the costs and widespread distribution of EWM. Currently, the Tribe and DNR have only allowed treatment through the District's permit. A public notice was published in the Shawano newspaper and a public hearing was held at the Legend Lake lodge on April 7, 2004 to discuss the proposed treatment. The treatment will take place in late spring or early summer 2004. If the area in front of your property is treated, a yellow sign describing the treatment will be posted by your dock or shoreline. There is a swimming and water use restriction for 24 hours following the application. Also, the water should not be used to irrigate fruit or vegetable plants for 14 days following treatment as the chemical in the water could affect those plants. If you have any questions on EWM, the APM Plan, or the proposed chemical treatment, please contact a District representative.