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AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT PLAN

LOWER NINEMILE LAKE
VIALS COUNTY, WISCONSIN

October 14, 2009

Prepared for:

Town of Washington Water Resources Task Force

Prepared by:

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WDNR Grant: LPL-1139-07
Northern Environmental Project Number: WTL 08-5500-0786

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lower Ninemile Lake is a 646-acre drainage lake located in south-eastern Vilas County. The Town of Washington Water Resource Task Force (TWWRTF), including the City of Eagle River, Town of Cloverland, and Town of Lincoln was formed to address the threat of Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum* - EWM) concerns and other lake issues. The TWWRTF contracted Northern Environmental to help develop an aquatic plant management (APM) plan for Lower Ninemile Lake. The APM Plan includes a review of available lake information, an aquatic plant survey, and an evaluation of feasible physical, mechanical, biological, and chemical aquatic plant management alternatives. The APM plan also recommended specific prevention activities for the EWM on Lower Ninemile Lake, which are discussed below.

Northern Environmental Technologies completed an aquatic plant survey on Lower Ninemile Lake in summer of 2007, which identified twenty-four aquatic plant species. The most abundant aquatic plants identified during the survey were northern wild rice (*Zizania palustris*) and bushy pondweed (*Najas flexilis*), fern or Robbins pondweed (*Potamogeton robbinsii*), and nitella (*Nitella sp.*). The Floristic Quality Index (FQI) is an index that uses the aquatic plant community as an indicator of lake health. Lower Ninemile Lake exhibited an FQI value of 29.02, higher than the Wisconsin Northern Ecoregion average (24.3).

Recommended Aquatic Plant Management Plan

No aquatic invasive plants were found during the aquatic plant survey in 2007. If an invasive plant were found the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) recommends that Lower Ninemile Lakes residents work with WDNR and aquatic plant professionals to determine extent of AIS after discovery and to then determine appropriate management (per WDNR Water Resource Management Specialist's, Kyle McLaughlin, comments dated December 23, 2008). The fact that the native plant community has an above average FQI score illustrates that there is a unique and diverse plant community in Lower Ninemile Lake. Such a plant community is worthy of protection from human disturbance and from the impact aquatic invasive species would have if introduced to this system. Because of that, the following Recommended Action Plan focuses on conservation and plant protection.

The following Active Goals form the structure of the Lower Ninemile Lake Aquatic Plant Management Plan:

Active Goal: To create a strong and successful WDNR Clean Boats, Clean Waters program on Lower Ninemile Lake.

Active Goal: To provide visitors with educational information concerning the potential impact their activities could have on introduction of aquatic invasive species, wildlife, habitats and Lower Ninemile Lake water quality.

Active Goal: To implement and maintain an aquatic invasive species monitoring program that will survey for invasive species, and if found, monitor their locations and extent of population spread.

Active Goal: To construct a comprehensive water quality monitoring program through the WDNR Citizen Lake Monitoring Network. The program would include Water Clarity Monitoring and Water Chemistry Monitoring.

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Active Goal: To support the identification and preservation of critical species and critical habitat lands, and wetlands within the watershed. (These are areas with rare vegetation, important habitat for wildlife, or important spawning and nursery areas for fish. Preservation of these lands has a direct impact on the water quality of the lake).

Active Goal: To provide education and information to shoreline property owners regarding how native aquatic plant protection and shoreline management can slow the spread of aquatic invasive plants (if they become introduced), improve the lake fishery, improve wildlife habitat and affect the quality of the water in the lake (including development of a *shoreline restoration packet* that could be given to landowners who's property has development categorized as Moderate or Major).

Active Goal: To encourage the incorporation of water quality protection measures in the design, construction and maintenance of all lake access sites on Lower Ninemile Lake (e.g. storm water control, site drainage control, appropriate plant matter disposal, and watercraft wash down facilities if found to be needed).

Active Goal: To meet on a regular basis with local government agencies and representatives of lakes located within the Town of Washington, to identify essential and new lake management issues and determine collaborative solutions.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Lower Ninemile Lake is a 646-acre drainage lake located in southeastern Vilas County. The lake has a 6,055 acre (9.46 square miles) watershed. Lower Ninemile Lake exhibits good water clarity and according to the Wisconsin Trophic State Index, is a mesotrophic lake.

Lake residents have become concerned about the possibility of the introduction of Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum* - EWM), curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus* - CLP) and other AIS into the aquatic plant community of Lower Ninemile Lake. Although no AIS were recorded during the aquatic plant survey in 2007, this APM Plan includes strategies for detection, monitoring, and management/removal of EWM and CLP from Lower Ninemile Lake if ever established.

This document is the APM Plan for Lower Ninemile Lake and discusses the following:

- Lake morphology and lake watershed characteristics
- Historical aquatic plant management activities
- Stakeholder's goals and objectives
- Aquatic plant ecology
- 2007 baseline aquatic plant survey
- Feasible aquatic plant management alternatives
- Selected suite of aquatic plant management options

3.0 BASELINE INFORMATION

3.1 Lake History and Morphology

Lower Ninemile Lake is located near the City of Eagle River in southeastern Vilas County, Wisconsin. The far southern portion of Lower Ninemile Lake is located in the northeastern portion of Oneida County. Figure 1 depicts the lake location. Water level on Lower Ninemile Lake is held by a dam operated by the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company at its outlet. The following summarizes the lake's physical attributes:

Lake Name	Lower Ninemile
Lake Type	Drainage
Surface Area (acres)	646
Maximum depth (feet)	7
Mean depth (feet)	15
Shoreline Length (miles)	13.5
Public Landing	Yes

Source: Wisconsin Lakes, WDNR 2005

Figure 2 illustrates the lake bathymetries. Lower Ninemile Lake provides year-round recreation activities ranging from, fishing, swimming, waterskiing, pleasure boating, snowmobiling, and more.

3.2 Watershed Overview

The Lower Ninemile Lake watershed encompasses approximately 19,445 acres in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties. The watershed surrounding Lower Ninemile Lake is primarily forested with portions in the Nicolet National Forest. Watershed land cover primarily consists of broad-leaved deciduous forest, mixed deciduous forest and some forested wetlands with some coniferous forest and general agriculture and grasslands. There is low lakeshore development with 44 residences along the lakeshore, primarily the north and west shores.

The lake is located within the Wisconsin Headwaters Basin Management Unit and is considered a wild rice lake. WDNR data show that several nearby lakes do contain EWM. Ninemile Creek upstream of the Upper Ninemile Lake is listed as an Exceptional Resource Water. The WDNR has not ranked the lakes in the watershed for non-point source pollution impacts.

3.3 Water Quality

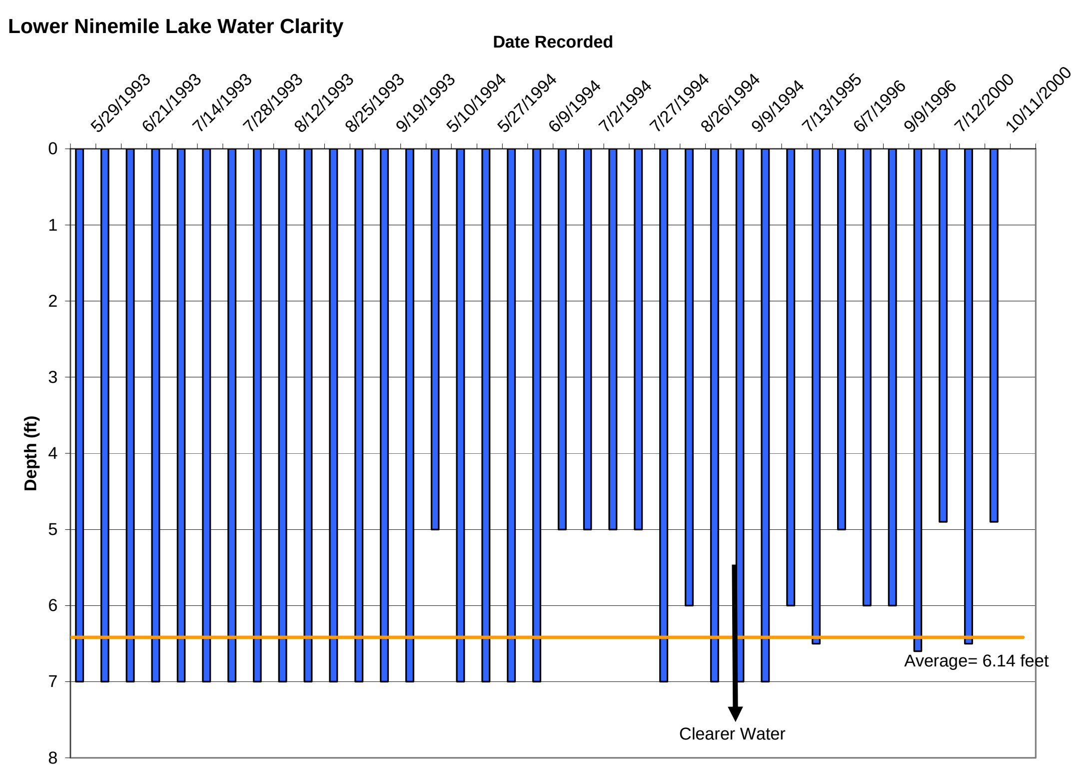
WDNR Lake Water Quality Database indicates that the following water quality information is available

- Water clarity (Secchi depth) 1993-1996, 2000 (Citizen Lake Monitoring)
- Total phosphorus– 2000-2002 (WDNR baseline monitoring)
- Chlorophyll a – 2000-2002 (WDNR baseline monitoring)

The above referenced data was used in creating the Lower Ninemile APM Plan. Higher Secchi depth readings indicate clearer water and deeper light penetration. Total Phosphorus is a measure of nutrients available for plant growth. Chlorophyll a is green pigment present in all plant life and necessary for photosynthesis. The amount present in lake water depends on the amount of algae suspended in the water column of a lake. Chlorophyll a is used as a common indicator of water quality (Shaw et al, 2004). Higher chlorophyll a values indicate lower water qualities

3.3.1 Water Clarity

Secchi readings were taken from 1993-1996 and 2000 on Lower Ninemile Lake. The average reading during this period was 6.47 feet (1.9 meters). The Secchi disc hit bottom on many occasions meaning clarity may actually be greater than the average, but the shallow nature of Lower Ninemile doesn't permit deeper readings. A Secchi reading was also taken during 2007 survey that reached bottom in five feet.



3.3.2 Total Phosphorus and Chlorophyll *a*

Data for summer total phosphorus and chlorophyll a was collected in 2000-2001. Total phosphorus concentrations ranged from 0.016 mg/L to 0.044 mg/L with an average of .02417 mg/L. Concentrations for chlorophyll *a* ranged from <1 to 16 µg/L and averaged 5.37 ug/L.

3.3.3 Trophic State Index

Trophic State Index (TSI) values are assigned to a lake based on total phosphorus, chlorophyll *a*, and water clarity values. The TSI is a measure of a lake's biological productivity. The TSI used for Wisconsin lakes is described below.

Category	TSI	Lake Characteristics	Total P (µg/l)	Chlorophyll a (µg/l)	Water Clarity *(feet)*
Oligotrophic	1-40	Clear water; oxygen rich at all depths, except if close to mesotrophic border; then may have low or no oxygen; cold-water fish likely in deeper lakes.	< 12	<2.6	>13
Mesotrophic	41-50	Moderately clear; increasing probability of low to no oxygen in bottom waters.	12 to 24	2.6 to 7.3	13 to 6.5
Eutrophic	51-70	Decreased water clarity; probably no oxygen in bottom waters during summer; warm-water fisheries only; blue-green algae likely in summer in upper range; plants also excessive.	> 24	>7	<6.5
Lower Ninemile Lake	**49.37**	**Mesotrophic**	**24.17**	**5.37**	**6.14**

Adopted from Carlson 1977, Lillie and Mason, 1983, and Shaw 1994 et. al.

The historical water clarity, total phosphorus, and chlorophyll a data indicate that Lower Ninemile Lake is a mesotrophic lake. Data collected during by Citizen Lake Monitors and during the 2007 aquatic plant survey is included in the above averages.

3.4 Summary of Lake Fishery

The following table identifies the fish species the WDNR lists as being present in Lower Ninemile Lake.

Fish Species	Present	Common	Abundant
Muskellunge	X		
Northern Pike		X	
Walleye		X	
Largemouth Bass	X		
Smallmouth Bass			
Panfish	X		

Source: WDNR Wisconsin Lakes Publication # PUB-FH-800, 2005

Fingerling walleye were stocked during the following years and levels by the WDNR in Lower Ninemile Lake:

Year	Total Stocked
1987	43200
1989	20060
1991	10017
1992	10038
1994	20390

All fisheries in Lower Ninemile Lake are currently sustained through natural reproduction. Lower Ninemile Lake is located in the "Ceded Territories" of Wisconsin. The Ceded Territories was ceded to the United States by the Lake Superior Chippewa Tribes in 1837 and 1842. The WDNR describes Native American fishing in the Ceded Territories this way: "The six Chippewa tribes of Wisconsin are legally able to harvest walleyes using a variety of high efficiency methods, but spring spearing is the most frequently used method. In spring each tribe declares how many walleyes and muskellunge they intend to harvest from each lake. Harvest begins shortly after ice-out, with nightly fishing permits issued to individual tribal spearers. Each permit allows a specific number of fish to be harvested, including one walleye between 20 and 24 inches and one additional walleye of any size. All fish that are taken are documented each night with a tribal clerk or warden present at each boat landing used in a given lake. Once the declared harvest is reached in a given lake, no more permits are issued for that lake and spearfishing ceases (http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/ceded/tribalharvest.html)."

All fishing regulations and bag limits for Lower Ninemile are concurrent with standard WDNR regulations in the Ceded Territories.

3.5 Lake Management History

There is little data available in regards to management history for Lower Ninemile Lake. The WDNR has stocked walleye according to the table presented above. The U.S. Forest Service planted wild rice in Upper Ninemile Lake in 1997. It has since spread down Ninemile Creek into Lower Ninemile Lake where it is now abundant.

3.6 Goals and Objectives

The TWWRTF identified the following goals for aquatic plant management on Lower Ninemile Lake.

- Maintain and improve recreational opportunities
- Protect and improve fish and wildlife habitat
- Preserve native aquatic plants
- Prevent the introductions of AIS
- Identify and Protect sensitive areas
- Identify sources of financial assistance for aquatic plant management activities
- Coordinate sound aquatic plant management practices where needed within Lower Ninemile Lake
- Educate the Lower Ninemile Lake community on proper AIS identification and prevention efforts
- Gather citizen input
- Increase citizen participation in lake management

4.0 PROJECT METHODS

To accomplish the project goals, the TWWRTF needs to make informed decisions regarding APM on the lake. To make informed decisions, TWWRTF proposed to:

- Collect, analyze, and interpret basic aquatic plant community data
- Recommend practical, scientifically-sound aquatic plant management strategies

Offsite and onsite research methods were used during this study. Offsite methods included a thorough review of available background information on the lake, its watershed, and water quality. An aquatic plant community survey was completed onsite to provide the data needed to evaluate aquatic plant management alternatives.

4.1 Existing Data Review

Northern Environmental researched a variety of information resources to develop a thorough understanding of the ecology of the Lake. Information sources included:

- Local and regional geologic, limnologic, hydrologic, and hydrogeologic research
- Discussions with lake members
- Available topographic maps and aerial photographs
- Data from WDNR files

These sources were essential to understanding the historic, present, and potential future conditions of the lake, as well as to ensure that previously completed studies were not unintentionally duplicated. Specific references are listed in Section 8.0 of this report.

4.2 Aquatic Plant Survey and Analysis

The aquatic plant community of the lake was surveyed on July 18 & 19, 2007 by Northern Environmental. The survey was completed according to the point intercept sampling method described by Madsen (1999) and as outlined in the WDNR draft guidance entitled "Aquatic Plant Management in Wisconsin" (WDNR, 2005).

WDNR research staff determined the sampling point resolution in accordance with the WDNR guidance and provided a base map with the specified sample point locations. The sample resolution was a seventy-five meter grid with 603 pre-determined intercept points (Figure 3). Latitude and longitude coordinates and sample identifications were assigned to each intercept point on the grid (Appendix A). Geographic coordinates were uploaded into a global positioning system (GPS) receiver. The GPS unit was then used to navigate to intercept points. At each intercept point, plants were collected by tossing a specialized rake on a rope and dragging the rake along the bottom sediments. All collected plants were identified to the lowest practicable taxonomic level (e.g., typically genus or species) and recorded on field data sheets. Visual observations of aquatic plants were also recorded. Water depth and, when detectable, sediment types at each intercept point were also recorded on field data sheets.

The point intercept method was used to evaluate the existing emergent, submergent, floating-leaf, and free-floating aquatic plants. If a species was not collected at a specific point, the space on the datasheet was left blank. For the survey, the data for each sample point was entered into the WDNR "Worksheets" (i.e., a data-processing spreadsheet) to calculate the following statistics:

- **Taxonomic richness** (the total number of taxa detected)
- **Maximum depth of plant growth**
- **Community frequency of occurrence** (number of intercept points where aquatic plants were detected divided by the number of intercept points shallower than the maximum depth of plant growth)
- **Mean intercept point taxonomic richness** (the average number of taxa per intercept point)
- **Mean intercept point native taxonomic richness** (the average number of native taxa per intercept point)
- **Taxonomic frequency of occurrence within vegetated areas** (the number of intercept points where a particular taxon (e.g., genus, species, etc.) was detected divided by the total number of intercept points where vegetation was present)
- **Taxonomic frequency of occurrence at sites within the photic zone** (the number of intercept points where a particular taxon (e.g., genus, species, etc.) was detected divided by the total number of intercept points which are equal to or shallower than the maximum depth of plant growth)
- **Relative taxonomic frequency of occurrence** (the number of intercept points where a particular taxon (e.g., genus, species, etc.) was detected divided by the sum of all species' occurrences)
- **Mean density** (the sum of the density values for a particular species divided by the number of sampling sites)
- **Simpson Diversity Index (SDI)** is an indicator of aquatic plant community diversity. SDI is calculated by taking one minus the sum of the relative frequencies squared for each species

present. Based upon the index of community diversity, the closer the SDI is to one, the greater the diversity within the population.

- **Floristic Quality Index (FQI)** (This method uses a predetermined Coefficient of Conservatism (C), that has been assigned to each native plant species in Wisconsin, based on that species' tolerance for disturbance. Non-native plants are not assigned conservatism coefficients. The aggregate conservatism of all the plants inhabiting a site determines its floristic quality. The mean C value for a given lake is the arithmetic mean of the coefficients of all native vascular plant species occurring on the entire site, without regard to dominance or frequency. The FQI value is the mean C times the square root of the total number of native species. This formula combines the conservatism of the species present with a measure of the species richness of the site.

4.3 Shoreline Characterization

The point intercept method described above may not accurately identify emergent and floating leaved aquatic plants in near shore areas. Therefore, a boat tour was completed traveling the entire perimeter of the lake's shoreline. During the boat tour, visual observations of the emergent and floating leaved plant communities were located and recorded. The boat tour also included a shoreline characterization, which provides an evaluation of shoreline development on the Lake. The following scale was used to rate the level of shoreline development.

- **1: Undeveloped** (i.e. Forested or wetland)
- **2: Minor development** (i.e. Properties may have mostly natural shoreline, sparse structures set further away from the lake, one pier, and little or no clearing of natural vegetation).
- **3: Moderate development** (i.e. Properties may exhibit clearing and/or manipulation to the shore and lawn areas but not to waters edge. More elaborate piers or boathouses may be present).
- **4: Major development** (i.e. Properties may include large lawn areas extending to the shoreline, which contains little or no natural shoreline vegetation. Increased building density, possibly close to the shore, multiple docks or boathouses, and significant shoreline alteration such as seawalls or rip rap may be present).

4.4 Public Involvement and Plan Review

Draft copies of the APM Plan for Lower Ninemile Lake, and other Town of Washington lakes, were submitted to the WDNR and the contact for the TWWRTF. The TWWRTF contact indicated that their group felt the plans were complete and accurate. In November of 2007, edited copies were bound and sent to the WDNR for approval. Hearing no comments from the WDNR on the approval of the plan by September of 2008, TWWRTF contacted WDNR to check the status; the review had not begun. While checking on the status of the WDNR, Ms. Sandy Gillum, a TWWRTF member and a Wisconsin Association of Lakes Board Member was asked by the WDNR representative what she thought of the plans. Ms. Gillum responded that she had not read the plans. Because of this the WDNR requested that the plans get released back to TWWRTF to again review the plans. Apparently TWWRTF only shared the plans with select members of their organization and WDNR was not satisfied with this procedure.

Ms. Gillum found representatives from the area to review the plans and provide comments. On October 4, 2008, the Friends of Ninemile Lake officially approved the plan with the caveat that the consultant made corrections as indicated by the Board. The consultant waited to make changes until the WDNR reviewed the document. On January 28, 2009 WDNR supplied comments regarding the Lower Ninemile Lake Plan. An agreement was worked out between the consultant that the plan preparation would wait until the Northern Region Office of the WDNR approved a plan format that would be expectable to use for the Lower Ninemile and other Northern Region APM plans. On June 11, 2009 the WDNR's Northern Region Rhinelander Office, provided comments on an APM plan for a nearby lake and followed up with a phone call that the APM plan format would be acceptable for the Town of Washington plans. At that point the consultant began to rewrite the 2007 plans. The plans were resubmitted to the WDNR in October of 2009.

4.5 Water Quality Methods

On July 18, 2007, water samples were collected during the aquatic plant survey. Water clarity is measured by lowering an 8-inch disk with alternating black and white quadrants called a Secchi disk. The Secchi disk is lowered into the water until it is no longer visible and the depth is recorded. The Secchi disk is then raised until it is again visible and that depth is recorded. The two readings are averaged providing the Secchi depth or water clarity measurement. This is used to determine how far sunlight can penetrate into water.

Chlorophyll a and Phosphorus were both collected with a grab sample at one point over the deep hole of the lake and sent to a lab for analysis. All procedures were completed in accordance with Citizen Lake Monitoring protocols.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF PROJECT RESULTS

5.1 Aquatic Plant Ecology

Aquatic plants are vital to the health of a water body. Unfortunately, people all too often refer to rooted aquatic plants as "weeds" and ultimately wish to eradicate them. This type of attitude, and the misconceptions it breeds, must be overcome in order to properly manage a lake ecosystem. Rooted aquatic plants (macrophytes) are extremely important for the well being of a lake community and possess many positive attributes. Despite their importance, aquatic macrophytes sometimes grow to nuisance levels that hamper recreational activities. This is especially prevalent in degraded ecosystems. The introduction of certain aquatic invasive species (AIS), such as EWM, often can exacerbate nuisance conditions, particularly when they compete successfully with native vegetation and occupy large portions of a lake.

When "managing" aquatic plants, it is important to maintain a well-balanced, stable, and diverse aquatic plant community that contains high percentages of desirable native species. To be effective, aquatic plant management in most lakes must maintain a plant community that is robust, species rich, and diverse. Appendix B includes a discussion about aquatic plant ecology, habitat types and relationships with water quality.

5.2 Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are aquatic plants and animals that have been introduced by human action to a location, area, or region where they did not previously exist. AIS often lack natural control mechanisms they may have had in their native ecosystem and may interfere with the native plant and animal interactions in their new “home”. Some AIS have aggressive reproductive potential and contribute to a decline of a lake’s ecology and interfere with recreational use of a lake. Common Wisconsin AIS include:

- Eurasian Watermilfoil
- Curly Leaf Pondweed
- Zebra Mussels
- Rusty Crayfish
- Spiny Water Flea
- Purple Loosestrife

Appendix C provides additional information on these AIS.

5.3 2007 Aquatic Plant Survey

The survey included sampling at 603 intercept points. The aquatic macrophyte community of the Lake included twenty-four floating leaved, emergent, and submerged aquatic vascular plant species during 2007. Table 1 lists the taxa identified during the 2007 aquatic plant survey. Figures 4a through Figure 4g illustrate the locations of each species identified.

Vegetation was identified to a maximum depth of six feet (photic zone). Aquatic vegetation was detected at 98.2% of photic zone intercept points. A diverse plant community inhabited the lake during 2007. The Simpson Diversity Index value of the community was 0.92. The taxonomic richness was twenty-four species and there was an average of 3.14 species identified at points that were within the photic zone. There was an average of 3.19 species present at points with vegetation present. Table 2 summarizes these overall aquatic plant community statistics. Table 3 includes the abundance statistics for each species. The species *Ceratophyllum echinatum* (spiny hornwort) was sampled and collected as a voucher species. However, it is very similar in appearance to coontail (C. demersum) and due to difficulty separating the species at sample points, all points containing either plant was recorded as *Ceratophyllum sp*.

The most abundant aquatic plant identified during the aquatic plant survey was northern wild rice *(Zizania palustris*) and bushy pondweed (*Najas flexilis*). It exhibited a 45% frequency of occurrence (percent of photic zone intercept points at which the taxa was detected), were present at 45.54% with vegetation, and had a 14.27% relative frequency of occurrence. Table 4 includes the abundance statistics for each species.

Northern Wild Rice
Source: UW Herbarium Website

Northern Wild Rice *(Zizania palustris*) is a shallow rooted emergent plant that sprouts from seed each spring. The first leaves to grow in May and June are narrow, limp and float on the waters surface. The have a smooth surface and pointed tip. By midsummer, flower stalks emerge. Northern wild rice is usually shorter than 3 meters with leaves ranging 4mm-3cm wide. Wild rice has a very specific habitat requirement, including water chemistry (Borman et al., 1997). Silt and muck sediment are the best substrates for growth with water depths ranging from 10cm to 1 meter. This plant provides food for Sora rails and red-wing blackbirds, and many other types of wildlife. The harvest of wild stands is an important Native American tradition, and is a commercial plant harvested by many non-Native Americans. Management of wild rice as an aquatic plant is done in cooperation between WDNR and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wild Commission (GLIFWIC). Wild rice is rarely removed once established due to its protected status and the important cultural role it plays in the Ceded Territories.

Bushy pondweed *(Najas flexilis)* has fine branched stems that emerge from a slight rootstalk. Slender Naiad can grow in both shallow and deep water. Waterfowl, marsh birds, and muskrats consume the stems, leaves, and seeds of naiad. The foliage produces forage and shelter opportunities for fish and invertebrates (Borman, et al., 1997).

Slender Naiad
Source: UW Herbarium Website

Fern or Robbins pondweed (*Potamogeton robbinsii*) was the second most abundant aquatic plant. It exhibited a 26.18% frequency of occurrence, was present at 26.49% of the sites with vegetation, and had an 8.3% relative frequency of occurrence.

Fern Pondweed
Source: UW Herbarium Website

Fern or Robbins pondweed (Potamogeton robbinsii) is a submergent pondweed with robust stems and strongly two-ranked leaves, creating a feather or fern-like appearance while in the water. Fern pondweed sprouts in the spring and thrive in deeper water. Fern pondweed provides habitat for invertebrates that are grazed by waterfowl and also offers good cover for fish, particularly northern pike (Borman, et al., 1997).

Nitella *(Nitella sp.)* was the third most abundant plant. It exhibited a 25% frequency of occurrence, was present at 25.3% of the sites with vegetation, and had a 7.93% relative frequency of occurrence.

Nitella sp. (Nitella) is another type of macroalgae that looks like a vascular plant. Nitella is similar in appearance to muskgrass and is often found in similar habitats. However, Nitella can be distinguished from muskgrass by its smooth stems and branches (Borman, et al., 1997).

Nitella sp.
Source: UW Herbarium Website

5.3.1 Floating-Leaf Plants

The following two floating-leaf aquatic plant species were identified during the 2007 aquatic plant survey.

- *Nuphar variegata* (spatterdock)
- *Nymphaea odorata* (white water lily)

5.3.2 Submergent Plants

The following nineteen submergent aquatic plant species were identified during the 2007 aquatic plant survey.

- *Algae sp.* (filamentous algae) [algal]
- *Ceratophyllum sp.*
- *Chara sp.* (muskgrass) [algal]
- *Drepanocladus sp.* (moss)
- *Elodea canadensis* (elodea)
- *Heternathera dubia* (water stargrass)
- *Megolodonta beckii* (water marigold)
- *Myriophyllum sibiricum* (northern water-milfoil)
- *Najas flexilis* (slender naiad / bushy pondweed)
- *Nitella sp* (nitella) [algal]
- *Potamogeton amplifolius* (large-leaf pondweed)
- *Potamogeton gramineus* (variable pondweed)
- *Potamogeton natans* (floating-leaf pondweed)
- *Potamogeton pusillus* (small pondweed)
- *Potamogeton richardsonii* (clasping-leaf pondweed)
- *Potamogeton robbinsii* (fern or Robbins pondweed)
- *Potamogeton zosteriformis* (flat-stem pondweed)
- *Utricularia vulgaris* (common bladderwort)
- *Vallisneria americana* (wild celery)

5.3.3 Emergent Plants

The following three emergent aquatic plant species were identified during the 2007 aquatic plant survey.

- *Sagittaria cristata* (crested arrowhead)
- *Sparganium sp.* (bur-reed)
- *Zizania palustris* (northern wild rice)

Table 1 lists the species identified. Appendix D includes brief descriptions of all aquatic plants identified.

5.4 Floristic Quality Index

Higher FQI numbers indicate higher floristic quality and biological integrity and a lower level of disturbance impacts. FQI varies around the state of Wisconsin and ranges from 3.0 to 44.6 with the average FQI of 22.2 (WDNR, 2005). The FQI calculated from the 2007 aquatic plant survey data was 30.55. This FQI value is higher than Wisconsin's northern region mean of 24.3 and suggests that Lower Ninemile Lake exhibits very good water quality when using aquatic plants as an indicator. Table 5 summarizes the FQI values. Filamentous algae, moss, and bur-reed were not identified to the species lever and were not included in calculation of the FQI.

5.5 Shoreline Characterization

Emergent and floating leaved plants identified along the shoreline outside of formal grid sample points included: sweet gale (*Myrica gale*) spatterdock *(Nuphar variegata*), white water lily *(Nymphaea odorata*), sedges *(Carex sp*.), bur-reed *(Sparganium sp.*), cattail *(Typha sp*), hardstem bulrush (*Schoenoplectus acutus*), softstem bulrush (*Scirpus validus*), and northern wild rice *(Zizania palustris).* Refer to Appendix D for descriptions of these plants. Figure 5 illustrates the floating leaved and emergent plant locations identified during the boat survey. Plants identified during the shoreline survey but not during the point-intercept method were not included in the community statistics or calculation of the FQI.

The majority of the shoreline was moderately developed with residences. Some scattered blocks of undeveloped woodlands were present on the lakeshore. Figure 5 illustrates the level of shoreline development.

5.6 Water Quality Sampling

2007 collected water samples were tested and showed a phosphorus reading of 0.020 mg/L and a chlorophyll *a* reading of 6.0 ug/L. A Secchi reading was taken at the same time and was visible to 5 feet. Both the Secchi disc and total phosphorus results are concurrent with the mesotrophic status of the lake. On many occasions, the secchi disc hit bottom while still visible. The water clarity on Lower Ninemile Lake is likely higher than indicated, but due to lake characteristics cannot be appropriately assessed.

6.0 MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES AND RECOMEDATION

Based on the goals of the stakeholders as mentioned in section 3.6, several management alternatives are available for this APM plan. No AIS were found in the Ninemile Lake System. Northern wild rice was the most abundant aquatic plan in Lower Ninemile Lake. Intentionally planted in the Ninemile Lake System wild rice has rappidly spread throughout the system. Some general alternatives for aquatic plants are discussed below. More information on management alternatives is included in Appendix E. Currently, the Northern Region of the WDNR is working under an aquatic plant management strategy that is officially titiled Aquatic Plant Management Strategy, Northern Region WDNR, Summer, 2007 (working draft), or commonly referred to the NOR Region APM Strategy (Appendix H). This strategy lays out an approach for acceptable aquatic plant management in Northern Region lakes. The strategy protects native aquatic plant communities in northern Wisconsin and does not allow permits to control native plants unless documented circumstances of nuisance levels exist. The Stategy specifically states as a goal "Prohibit removal of wild rice. WDNR – Northern Region will not issue permits to remove wild rice unless a request is subjected to the full consultation process via the Voigt Tribal Task Force. We intend to discourage applications for removal of this ecologically and culturally important native plant." It should also be noted that wild rice is not eligible to be removed by hand without a permit. The following management alternatives are based on the approaches described in the NOR Region APM Strategy, and incorporate recommendations of Northern Environmental.

6.1 Aquatic Plant Maintenance Alternatives

The maintaenance alternative may be used at a lake in which a healthy aquatic plant community exists and invasive and non-native plant species are generally not present. The maintenance alternative is a protection-oriented management alternative because no significant plant problems exist or no active manipulation is required. This alternative can include an educational plan to inform lake shore owners of the value of a natural shoreline and encourage the protection of the lake water quality and the native aquatic plant community.

6.1.1 Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring

No AIS were identified during the 2007 survey in Lower Ninemile Lake. In order to monitor for AIS in the future a strong Citizen Lake Monitoring program that surveys for AIS is highly recommended. In some lake systems, native aquatic plants "hold their own" and AIS never grow to nuisance levels, in others however, vigilant and active management is required. This can be based on several things including water quality. Data provided on the WDNR Citizen Lake Monitoring website indicates monitoring of water clarity was last completed in 2006. Lower Ninemile Lake residents should also consider becoming active Citizen Lake Monitors for water quality (Secchi depth, total phosphorus and chlorophyll *a*).

Assuming an AIS were to become established in the next several years, the most likely species would be EWM or CLP. If these or other AIS are found a sample should be collected and taken to the DNR for proper confirmation. The University of Wisconsin-Extension Lake's Program provides training and coordinates the Citizen Lake Monitoring Program. More information about the program is available by contacting Laura Herman, Citizen Lake Monitoring Network Education Specialist, (715) 346-3989, email: lherman@uwsp.edu, website: http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/clmn/.

Northern Environmental also recommends completing lake-wide aquatic plant surveys every 5 years (essentially repeating the 2007 point intercept aquatic plant survey) to monitor changes in the overall aquatic plant community and the effects of the APM activities. Aquatic plant communities may change with varying water levels, water clarity, nutrient levels, and aquatic plant management actions.

6.1.2 Clean Boats/Clean Waters Campaign

Measures for the prevention of the introduction of AIS to the lake should be a priority. To prevent the spread of AIS into Lower Ninemile Lake, a monitoring program such as Clean Boats/Clean Waters is an excellent choice. There is one public landing on Lower Ninemile Lake and lake residents are currently participating in Clean Boats/Clean Waters (CB/CW) program. This program is carried out by trained volunteers who inspect the incoming boats at public launches. Signage also accompanies the use of CB/CW to inform lake users of proper identification of AIS and boat inspection procedures. Education of the public, along with private property and resort owners, about inspecting watercraft for AIS before launching a boat or leaving access sites on other lakes could help prevent new AIS infestations. Contact with lake users at this time is a great way to distribute other educational materials. Continuation of this program is recommended and should be promoted by the current CB/CW coordinator on the lake.

6.1.3 Aquatic Plant Protection and Shoreline Management

Protection of the native aquatic plant community is needed to slow the spread of EWM from lake to lake and within a lake once established. Therefore, riparian landowners should refrain from removing native vegetation. Additionally, EWM can thrive in nutrient (phosphorus and nitrogen) enriched waters or where nutrient rich sediments occur. Two simple actions can prevent excessive nutrients and sediments from reaching the lake.

The first activity is the restoration of natural shorelines, which act as a buffer for runoff containing nutrients and sediments. Properties classified in the shoreland survey as having a level 3: Moderate Development or level 4: Major Development, would be good candidates for shoreland restorations. Establishing natural shoreline vegetation can sometimes be as easy as not mowing to the waters edge. Native plants can also be purchased from nurseries for restoration efforts. Shoreline restoration has the added benefits of providing wildlife habitat and erosion prevention. A vegetated buffer area can also prevent surface water runoff from roads, parking areas and lawns from carrying nutrients to the lake.

The Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department offers a cost-share program for county landowners. The primary emphasis of the program continues to be to restore native vegetation to shoreland property. For shoreline restoration projects and other conservation practices involving revegetation activities, landowners are reimbursed up to 70% of the costs of planting and purchasing native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. Interested landowners can contact the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department at (715) 479-3648 to request an application form for the program. Another avenue to fund shoreland restoration is the WDNR Lake Protection Grant program. This program offers 75% of the project cost covered by the state up to $200,000. For more information on the Lake Protection Grant program contact the Lake Management Coordinator at the WDNR Rhinelander Service Center by calling (715) 365-8937.

The second easy nutrient prevention effort is to use lawn fertilizers only when a soil test shows a lack of nutrients. Phosphorus free fertilizers should be used when possible. The fertilizers commonly used for lawns and gardens have three major plant macronutrients: Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium. These are summarized on the fertilizer package by three numbers. The middle number represents the amount of phosphorus. Since most Wisconsin lakes are “Phosphorus limited”, meaning additions of phosphorus can cause increased aquatic plant or algae growth, preventing phosphorus from reaching the lake is a good practice. Landowners should be encouraged to use phosphorus free fertilizers on lakeshore lawns. Local retailers and lawn care companies can provide soil test kits to determine a lawn’s nutrient needs. Of course, properties with an intact natural buffer require very little maintenance, and no fertilizers.

Another possible source of nutrients to a lake is the septic systems surrounding the lake. Septic systems should be properly installed and maintained in order to prevent improperly treated wastewater, which carries a lot of nutrients, from reaching the lake. Property owners who are not sure if their septic system is adding nutrients to the lake should contact a professional inspector and have their system assessed.

6.1.4 Public Education and Involvement

The TWWRTF should continue to keep abreast of current AIS issues throughout the County. The County Land and Water Resource Conservation Department and the WDNR Lakes Coordinator, and the UW Extension are good sources of information. Many important materials can be ordered at the following website:

http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/publications/

Appendix G includes resources for further information about public education opportunities.
If the above hyperlink to web address becomes inactive, please contact Northern Environmental for appropriate program and contact information.

6.2 Aquatic Plant Manipulation Alternatives

The management alternative may be used when aquatic plants present some sort of problem that must be dealt with or manipulated by human action. The WDNR NOR Region APM Strategy states “Newly-discovered infestations, if found on a lake with an approved lake management plan, the invasive species can be controlled via an amendment to the approved plan.” The following alternatives are based on the assumption that the TWWRTF will meet in consultation with the WDNR before pursuing manipulation of AIS populations. It is understood that northern wild rice was very abundant, not historically present on in the lake system, and seen by some as an invasive plant. However northern wild rice is culturally significant in northern Wisconsin, serving as a traditional food source for the Ojibwa people and as a desirable harvest crop for non-Indian people as well, and as such it is protected where it occurs. The GLIFWC helps ensure rice protection and comments on any WDNR plan that will alter rice or the waters containing rice. GLIFWC generally does not allow for whole lake control of wild rice.

6.2.1 Manual Removal

Native plants may be found at nuisance levels at individual properties. Manual removal efforts, including hand raking or hand pulling unwanted plants, is allowed under Wisconsin law, to a maximum width of 30 feet (recreational zone). The intent is to provide pier, boatlift or swimming raft access in the recreation zone. A permit is not required for hand pulling or raking if the maximum width cleared does not exceed this 30-foot recreation zone (manual removal of any native aquatic vegetation beyond the 30-foot area would require a permit from the WDNR that satisfies the requirements of Chapter NR 109, Wisconsin Administrative Code, see Appendix F). However manual removal is **not** recommended because it could open a niche for non-native invasive aquatic plants to occupy. Removal of native plants also destroys habitat for fish and wildlife.

If an Aquatic invasive plant is found in a small population hand pulling is a good first line of defense. If EWM or CLP ever becomes established within Lower Ninemile Lake, manual (hand) removal of these plants in small, isolated populations, particularly in shallow water would be appropriate. No permit is required to remove non-native invasive aquatic vegetation, as long as the removal is conducted completely by hand with no mechanical assistance of any kind. All aquatic plant material must be removed from the water to minimize dispersion and re-germination of unwanted aquatic plants. Portions of the roots may remain in the sediments, so removal may need to be repeated periodically throughout the growing season. Before significant plant removal is undertaken, a sample of the species assumed to be EWM or CLP should be brought to and confirmed by the WDNR.

Manual removal of aquatic plants can be quite labor intensive and time consuming. This technique is well suited for small areas in shallow water where property owners can weed the aquatic garden. Hiring laborers to remove aquatic vegetation is an option, but also increases cost. Scuba divers can be contracted to remove unwanted vegetation in deeper areas. Benefits of manual removal by property owners include low cost compared to chemical control methods, quick containment of pioneering (new) populations of invasive aquatic plants, and the ability for a property owner to slowly and consistently work on active management. The drawback of this alternative is that pulling aquatic plants include the challenge of working in the water, especially deep water, the threat of letting fragments escape and colonize a new area, and the fact that control of any significant sized population is quite labor intensive. Again, hiring laborers to remove aquatic vegetation is an option, but also increases cost.

Landowners removing plants manually should learn to identify the aquatic plant species. If an individual has questions about a particular aquatic plant or what level of manual removal is allowed , they should talk to the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department at (715) 479-3648, or the Kevin Gauthier, Lakes Management Coordinator, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 107 Sutliff Ave, Rhinelander, (715) 365-8937. Appendix F includes additional resources for plant identification.

6.2.2 Aquatic Invasive Plant Species Chemical Herbicide Treatment

If Lower Ninemile Lake becomes infested with EWM or CLP of areas of approximately ¼ acre or greater, a chemical herbicide treatment may be an appropriate way to conduct restoration of native plants. Before any specific course of action is undertaken the WDNR must be consulted. As of the time this report is written the consultation would begin with Kevin Gauthier, Lakes Management Coordinator in Rhinelander, (715) 365-8937. All herbicide treatments must be undertaken with a WDNR issued permit (NR 107 Wisconsin Administrative Code). A WDNR, AIS Early Detection and Rapid Response Grant is usually the best place for a lake group to receive financial assistance for chemical treatment of a newly discovered AIS population.

When using chemicals to control AIS it is a good idea to reevaluate the lake and the extent of the AIS conditions before, during and after chemical treatment. The WDNR may require another whole-lake plant survey and will certainly require a proposed treatment area survey. Along with the above mentioned survey, pre and post treatment monitoring should be included for all aquatic plant treatments and is typically a WDNR requirement in their Northern Region.

The science regarding what chemicals are most effective and how they can be used is constantly being updated. Currently EWM is the most common aquatic invasive plant species targeted for chemical treatment in the Northwoods. At present, granular 2,4-D is the most common herbicide used on EWM in the Northwood's area. In order to decrease damage to native plants and be as selective as possible for EWM, treatments are completed in the spring when native plant growth is minimal.

Chemical treatment is usually a long term commitment and requires a specific plan with a goal set for "tolerable" levels of the relevant AIS. One such landmark might be 10% or less of the littoral area being occupied by aquatic invasive plants. WDNR recommends conducting a whole-lake point-intercept survey on a five year bases (for Lower Ninemile Lake the next would be 2012). Such a survey may reveal a new AIS and at the very least would provide good trend data to see how the aquatic plant community is evolving.

Advantages of herbicides include broader control than hand pulling, and represents a true restoration effort, which harvesters do not (this is why harvesters are not discussed in this document). Disadvantages include negative public perception of chemicals in natural lakes, the potential to affect non-target plant species (if not applied at an appropriate application rate and/or time of year) and water use restrictions after application may be necessary.

6.2.3 Permitting Individual Property Owner for Wild Rice Control

GLIFWC and WDNR do not allow for cutting or chemical herbicide treatment of wild rice. GLIFWC and WDNR do recognize the desire for individual property owners to have access to open water. Individual property owners can obtain a state permit to hand remove wild rice. If wild rice is determined to occur at a nuisance level, then a permit may be issued. All permits are reviewed both by WDNR and GLIFWC. If the permit is granted it is generally to create a navigation channel from an individual's lakefront property to open water. These channels can vary in width but typically would not exceed 20-feet and again, would require that the rice removal was done by hand.

7.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Lower Ninemile Lake is a 646 acre drainage lake with a 19,445 acre watershed which is primarily forested. Available water quality data indicates the lake is mesotrophic.

During the 2007 survey twenty-five aquatic plant species were identified. The most abundant aquatic plants identified during the survey were northern wild rice (*Zizania palustris*) and bushy pondweed (*Najas flexilis*) which were found at 45% of the photic zone. Fern or Robbins pondweed (*Potamogeton robbinsii*) and nitella (*Nitella sp.*) were the second and third most abundant species sampled at 26.2% and 25% of the photic zone, respectively. The Floristic Quality Index (FQI) is an index that uses the aquatic plant community as an indicator of lake health. Lower Ninemile Lake exhibited an FQI value of 30.55, higher than the Wisconsin northern Ecoregion average (24.3). This indicates above average water quality when using aquatic plants as an indicator.

7.1 Recommended Active Goals

The recommended action plan includes actions for Lower Ninemile Lake based on the Maintenance Alternative listed above in Section 6. The TWWRTF president has approved the following active goals. It will be up to residents of Lower Ninemile Lake and the TWWRTF to determine the actions, find the funding, and gather the individuals needed to implement the active goals.

Active Goal: To create a strong and successful WDNR Clean Boats, Clean Waters program on Lower Ninemile Lake.

Active Goal: To provide visitors with educational information concerning the potential impact their activities could have on introduction of aquatic invasive species, wildlife, habitats and Lower Ninemile Lake water quality.

Active Goal: To implement and maintain an aquatic invasive species monitoring program that will survey for invasive species, and if found, monitor their locations and extent of population spread.

Active Goal: To construct a comprehensive the Lower Ninemile Lake comprehensive water quality monitoring program through the WDNR Citizen Lake Monitoring Network. The program would include Water Clarity Monitoring and Water Chemistry Monitoring.

Active Goal: To work in concert with the WDNR staff and representatives of fishing related businesses to evaluate Lower Ninemile Lake fish management practices and develop goals in order to maintain and enhance a quality family sport fishery.

Active Goal: To develop and implement a fishing tournament AIS management and monitoring program in order to be prepared if fishing tournaments come to Lower Ninemile Lake.

Active Goal: To support the identification and preservation of critical species and critical habitat lands, and wetlands within the watershed. (These are areas with rare vegetation, important habitat for wildlife, or important spawning and nursery areas for fish. Preservation of these lands has a direct impact on the water quality of the lake).

Active Goal: To provide education and information to shoreline property owners regarding how native aquatic plant protection and shoreline management can slow the spread of aquatic invasive plants (if they become introduced), improve the lake fishery, improve wildlife habitat and affect the quality of the water in the lake (including development of a *shoreline restoration packet* that could be given to landowners who's property has development categorized as Moderate or Major).

Active Goal: To encourage the incorporation of water quality protection measures in the design, construction and maintenance of all lake access sites on Lower Ninemile Lake (e.g. storm water control, site drainage control, appropriate plant matter disposal, and watercraft wash down facilities if found to be needed).

Active Goal: To meet on a regular basis with local government agencies and representatives of lakes located within the Town of Washington, to identify essential and new lake management issues and determine collaborative solutions.

7.2 Closing

This APM Plan was prepared in cooperation with the Washington Town Lakes Committee. It includes the major components outlined in the WDNR Aquatic Plant Management guidance. The "Recommended Action Plan" section of this report can be used as a stand alone document to facilitate EWM management activities for the lake. This section outlines important monitoring and management activities. The greater APM Plan document and appendices provides a central source of information for the lake's aquatic plant community information, the overall lake ecology, and sources of additional information. If there are any questions about how to use this APM Plan or its contents, please contact Northern Environmental.

This APM Plan should be updated periodically to reflect current aquatic plant problems, and the most recent acceptable APM methods. Information regarding aquatic plant management and protection is available from the WDNR website: http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/fhp/lakes/aquaplan.htm or from Northern Environmental upon request.

8.0 REFERENCES

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FIGURES

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TABLES

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APPENDIX A

POINT INTERCEPT SAMPLE COORDINATES

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APPENDIX B

IMPORTANCE OF AQUATIC PLANTS TO LAKE ECOSYSTEM

Aquatic Plant Types and Habitat

Aquatic plants can be divided into two major groups: microphytes (phytoplankton and epiphytes) composed mostly of single-celled algae, and macrophytes that include macro algae, flowering vascular plants, and aquatic mosses and ferns. Wide varieties of microphytes co-inhabit all habitable areas of a lake. Their abundance depends on light, nutrient availability, and other ecological factors.

In contrast, macrophytes are predominantly found in distinct habitats located in the littoral (i.e., shallow near shore) zone where light sufficient for photosynthesis can penetrate to the lake bottom. The littoral zone is subdivided into four distinct transitional zones: the eulittoral, upper littoral, middle littoral, and lower littoral (Wetzel, 1983).

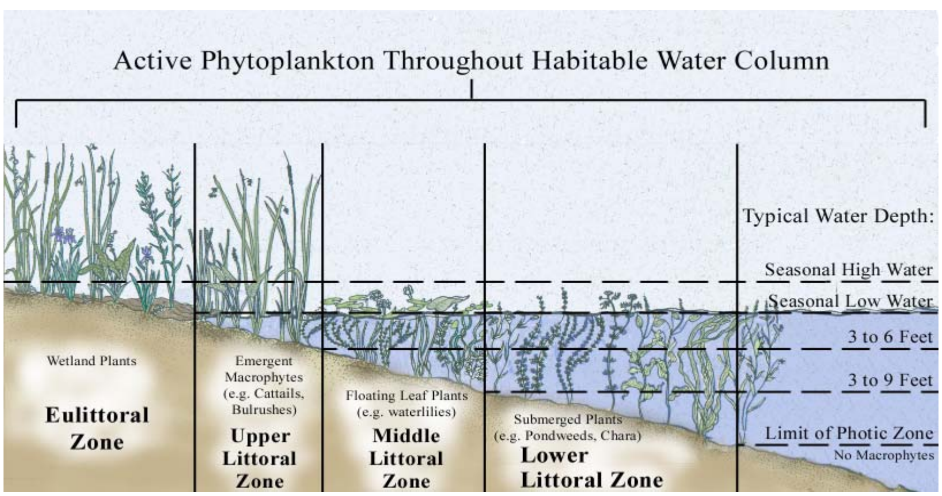
Eulittoral Zone: Includes the area between the highest and lowest seasonal water levels, and often contains many wetland plants.

Upper Littoral Zone: Dominated by emergent macrophytes and extends from the shoreline edge to water depths between 3 and 6 feet.

Middle Littoral Zone: Occupies water depths of 3 to 9 feet, extending deeper from the upper littoral zone. The middle littoral zone is often dominated by floating-leaf plants.

Lower Littoral Zone: Extends to a depth equivalent to the limit of the photic zone, which is the maximum depth that sufficient light can support photosynthesis. This area is dominated by submergent aquatic plant types.

The following illustration depicts these particular zones and aquatic plant communities.



Aquatic Plant Communities Schematic

The abundance and distribution of aquatic macrophytes are controlled by light availability, lake trophic status as it relates to nutrients and water chemistry, sediment characteristics, and wind energy. Lake morphology and watershed characteristics relate to these factors independently and in combination (NALMS, 1997).

Aquatic Plants and Water Quality

In many instances aquatic plants serve as indicators of water quality due to the sensitive nature of plants to water quality parameters such as water clarity and nutrient levels. To grow, aquatic plants must have adequate supplies of nutrients. Microphytes and free-floating macrophytes (e.g., duckweed) derive all their nutrients directly from the water. Rooted macrophytes can absorb nutrients from water and/or sediment. Therefore, the growth of phytoplankton and free-floating aquatic plants is regulated by the supply of critical available nutrients in the water column. In contrast, rooted aquatic plants can normally continue to grow in nutrient-poor water if lake sediment contains adequate nutrient concentrations. Nutrients removed by rooted macrophytes from the lake bottom may be returned to the water column when the plants die. Consequently, killing too many aquatic macrophytes may increase nutrients available for algal growth.

In general, an inverse relationship exists between water clarity and macrophyte growth. That is, water clarity is usually improved with increasing abundance of aquatic macrophytes. Two possible explanations are postulated. The first is that the macrophytes and epiphytes out-compete phytoplankton for available nutrients. Epiphytes derive essentially all of their nutrient needs from the water column. The other explanation is that aquatic macrophytes stabilize bottom sediment and limit water circulation, preventing re-suspension of solids and nutrients (NALMS, 1997).

If aquatic macrophyte abundance is reduced, then water clarity may suffer. Water clarity reductions can further reduce the vigor of macrophytes by restricting light penetration. Studies have shown that if 30 percent or less of a lake areas occupied by aquatic plants is controlled, water clarity will generally not be affected. However, lake water clarity will likely be reduced if 50 percent or more of the macrophytes are controlled (NALMS, 1997).

Aquatic plants also play a key role in the ecology of a lake system. Aquatic plants provide food and shelter for fish, wildlife and invertebrates. Plants also improve water quality by protecting shorelines and the lake bottom, improving water quality, adding to the aesthetic quality of the lake and impacting recreational activities.

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APPENDIX C

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive Aquatic Plants

Invasive species have invaded our backyards, forests, prairies, wetlands, and waters. Invasive species are often transplanted from other regions, even from across the globe. "A species is regarded as invasive if it has been introduced by human action to a location, area, or region where it did not previously occur naturally (i.e., is not native), becomes capable of establishing a breeding population in the new location without further intervention by humans, and spreads widely throughout the new location " (Source: WDNR website, Invasive Species, 2007). AIS include plants and animals that affect our lakes, rivers, and wetlands in negative ways. Once in their new environment, AIS often lack natural control mechanisms they may have had in their native ecosystem and may interfere with the native plant and animal interactions in their new "home". Some AIS have aggressive reproductive potential and contribute to ecological declines and problems for water based recreation and local economies. AIS often quickly become a problem in already disturbed lake ecosystems (i.e. one with relatively few native plant species). While native plants provide numerous benefits, AIS can contribute to ecological decline and financial constraints to manage problem infestations.

Eurasian Watermilfoil *(Myriophyllum spicatum)*

EWM is the most common AIS found in Wisconsin lakes. EWM was first discovered in southeast Wisconsin in the 1960's. During the 1980's, EWM began to spread to other lakes in southern Wisconsin and by 1993 it was common in 39 Wisconsin counties. EWM continues to spread across Wisconsin and is now found in the far northern portion of the state including Vilas County.

Unlike many other plants, EWM does not rely on seed for reproduction. Its seeds germinate poorly under natural conditions. It reproduces vegetatively by fragmentation, allowing it to disperse over long distances. The plant produces fragments after fruiting once or twice during the summer. These shoots may then be carried downstream by water currents or inadvertently picked up by boaters. EWM is readily dispersed by boats, motors, trailers, bilges, live wells, or bait buckets, and can stay alive for weeks if kept moist (WDNR website, 2007).

Once established in an aquatic community, EWM reproduces from shoot fragments and stolons (runners that creep along the lake bed). As an opportunistic species, EWM is adapted for rapid growth early in spring. Stolons, lower stems, and roots persist over winter and store the carbohydrates that help milfoil claim the water column early in spring, photosynthesize, divide, and form a dense leaf canopy that shades out native aquatic plants. Its ability to spread rapidly by fragmentation and effectively block out sunlight needed for native plant growth often results in monotypic stands. Monotypic stands of EWM provide only a single habitat, and threaten the integrity of aquatic communities in a number of ways; for example, dense stands disrupt predator-prey relationships by fencing out larger fish, and reducing the number of nutrient-rich native plants available for waterfowl (WDNR website, 2007).

Dense stands of EWM also inhibit recreational uses like swimming, boating, and fishing. The visual impact that greets the lake user on milfoil-dominated lakes is the flat yellow-green of matted vegetation, often prompting the perception that the lake is "infested" or "dead". Cycling of nutrients from sediments to the water column by EWM may lead to deteriorating water quality and algae blooms of infested lakes (WDNR website, 2007).

Curly leaf pondweed *(Potamogeton crispus)*

Curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) spreads through burr-like winter buds (turions), which are moved among waterways. These plants can also reproduce by seed, but this plays a relatively small role compared to the vegetative reproduction through turions. New plants form under the ice in winter, making CLP one of the first nuisance aquatic plants to emerge in the spring.

The leaves of curly-leaf pondweed are reddish-green, oblong, and about 3 inches long, with distinct wavy edges that are finely toothed. The stem of the plant is flat, reddish-brown and grows from 1 to 3 feet long. The plant usually drops to the lake bottom by early July.

CLP becomes invasive in some areas because of its tolerance for low light and low water temperatures. These tolerances allow it to get a head start on and out-compete native plants in the spring. CLP forms surface mats that interfere with aquatic recreation in mid-summer, when most aquatic plants are growing, CLP plants are dying off. Plant die-offs may result in a critical loss of dissolved oxygen. Furthermore, the decaying plants can increase nutrients which contribute to algal blooms, as well as create unpleasant stinking messes on beaches (WDNR website, 2007).

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Purple loosestrife is a perennial herb 3-7 feet tall with a dense bushy growth form. Showy flowers vary from purple to magenta, possess 5-6 petals aggregated into numerous long spikes, and bloom from July to September. Leaves are opposite, nearly linear, and attached to four-sided stems without stalks. It has a large, woody taproot with fibrous rhizomes that form a dense mat.

Purple loosestrife was first detected in Wisconsin in the early 1930's, but remained uncommon until the 1970's. It is now widely dispersed in the state, and has been recorded in 70 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Low densities in most areas of the state suggest that the plant is still in the pioneering stage of establishment. Areas of heaviest infestation are sections of the Wisconsin River, the extreme southeastern part of the state, and the Wolf and Fox River drainage systems.

This plant's optimal habitat includes marshes, stream margins, alluvial flood plains, sedge meadows, and wet prairies. It is tolerant of moist soil and shallow water sites such as pastures and meadows, although established plants can tolerate drier conditions. Purple loosestrife has also been planted in lawns and gardens, which is often how it has been introduced to many of our wetlands, lakes, and rivers. Purple loosestrife spreads mainly by seed, but it can also spread vegetatively from root or stem segments. A single stalk can produce from 100,000 to 300,000 seeds per year. Seed survival is up to 60-70%, resulting in an extensive seed bank. Mature plants with up to 50 shoots grow over 2 meters high and produce more than two million seeds a year. Germination is restricted to open, wet soils and requires high temperatures, but seeds remain viable in the soil for many years. Even seeds submerged in water can live for approximately 20 months (WDNR website, 2007).

Other Aquatic Invasive Species

The following AIS are not plants, but are mentioned here because they also can significantly disrupt healthy aquatic ecosystems.

Rusty Crayfish *(Orconectes rusticus)* are large crustaceans that feed aggressively on aquatic plants, small invertebrates, small fish, and fish eggs. They can remove nearly all the aquatic vegetation from a lake, offsetting the balance of a lake ecosystem. More information about this invader can be found at http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/rusty.htm.

Zebra Mussels *(Dreissena polymorpha)* are small freshwater clams that can attach to hard substrates in water bodies, often forming large of thousands of individual mussels. They are prolific filter feeders, removing valuable phytoplankton from the water, which is the base of the food chain in an aquatic ecosystem. More information about this invader can be found at http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/zebra.htm.

Spiny Water Fleas (*Bythotrephes cederstoemi)* are predatory zooplankton (tiny aquatic animals) that have a barbed tail making up most of their body length (one centimeter average). They compete with small fish for food supplies (zooplankton) and small fish cannot swallow the spiny water flea due to the long spiny appendage. More research is being completed to determine the potential impacts of the spiny water flea. More information about this invader can be found at
http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/spiny.htm.

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APPENDIX D

DESCRIPTONS OF AQUATIC PLANTS

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APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

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APPENDIX F

NR 107 AND NR 109 WISCONSIN ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

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APPENDIX G

RESOURCE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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APPENDIX H

AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, NORTHERN REGION WDNR

AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT PLAN

LOWER NINEMILE LAKE VILAS COUNTY, WISCONSIN

October 14, 2009