

We Energies
2013 Annual Report - Nuisance Plant Control Survey
Big Quinnesec Falls Reservoir
FERC Project #1980

Background and Methods

We Energies' Environmental department staff, Mr. Mike Grisar and Mr. Bill Braunschweig, conducted a survey from a boat of the entire shoreline at the Big Quinnesec Falls project on August 23, 2013. All waters and appropriate wetlands accessible from the boat were evaluated. Those species targeted for the survey included purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Eurasian water milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*). The visual meander survey included areas of shallow water adjacent to the shorelines. Shallow water was surveyed to a point where the water depth and clarity excluded visibility conducive to observing submerged vegetation. On average, this depth was at approximately 7-feet.

Visual observations for Eurasian water milfoil were made and compared to 2011 survey results. Relative changes in the extent and distribution of Eurasian water milfoil were noted. Specific locations of purple loosestrife were mapped using a Trimble XH GPS unit. Each location was identified as a stand and the number of plants, stems per plant, and relative age of the plants were recorded.

Results and Discussion

No purple loosestrife plants were observed along the shores of the Big Quinnesec Falls Reservoir project area.

Specific mapping of Eurasian water milfoil stand extents and densities were not conducted in 2013, but rather visual observations comparing the 2011 results to observed conditions in 2013. Generally, the distribution and density of Eurasian water milfoil appeared to be less than that observed in 2011. Example stands where reductions in distribution, density, or both were observed in 2013 include stands 1, 2, 5, 8, & 24. Additionally, stands 10, 11, & 25 were absent.

Conclusions

Purple loosestrife has yet to be observed at the Big Quinnesec Falls project area since the nuisance plant surveys began. Diligent monitoring will continue to prevent an invasion of this species.

Overall, the Eurasian water milfoil infestation in Big Quinnesec appeared to have improved from 2011 to 2013. Consistently, changes in the number of stands, overall coverage, spatial distribution of individual stands, and stand densities have been well documented from 2006 through 2012 on all of the We Energies reservoirs where Eurasian water milfoil is present throughout the Menominee River system. Conditions exhibit a majority of positive trends some years, remain relatively constant in others, and also decrease as observed at Big Quinnesec in 2013. These trends indicate the Eurasian water milfoil population is in flux from year to year. Contributing factors include influences of local and annual climate variances (i.e. precipitation and temperature), the presence of the indigenous milfoil weevil population, extent of milfoil hybridization, and others.

Annual fluctuations in the extent and density of Eurasian water milfoil appear to be due, in large part, to the presence of an indigenous weevil population occurring in the system. After four years of monitoring the weevil population, positive trends were observed between weevil population and Eurasian water milfoil population fluctuations. These trends indicate the indigenous weevil population tends to increase as the Eurasian water milfoil population increases. Evidence shows the milfoil populations ultimately spike before declining. The weevil populations tend to lag behind the milfoil population spike, and it spikes as the milfoil population begins declining and crashes as observed in some reservoirs. The weevil population spikes are followed by substantial decreases in the respective populations. It appears a cycle occurs between these two populations.