

Eurasian Watermilfoil: A Newsletter from your Lake Stewardship Group

June 2011

Eurasian Watermilfoil clogs lakes, spoils boating and makes swimming impossible!

Some lakes in Greater Sudbury have been overrun by an invasive species of aquatic plant called Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM). It grows at depths from 0.7 to 5 metres (2 to 15 feet) and becomes a mass of vegetation that makes recreational use of the lake at those depths impossible. Lakefront property owners have dealt with this problem for years without any really successful outcome.

Solution to the Eurasian Watermilfoil problem

A group of Lake Stewardship representatives from Simon, Richard, Long, St. Charles and McFarlane Lakes, the Milfoil Focus Group (part of the Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance), have been active in developing a plan to reduce the presence of and control the spread of EWM. The best solution found that is ecologically sound but effective in controlling EWM is to enhance the naturally-occurring population of insects called milfoil weevils, which feed on EWM. A company called EnviroScience Inc. has been contracted by the City of Greater Sudbury to collect, breed and deposit these local weevils in selected patches of EWM within Simon, Long, McFarlane, Richard, St. Charles, Hannah, Middle and Grant Lakes.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Who is paying for this project and how long will it take?

The Milfoil Focus Group applied to Environment Canada's Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program for a grant to cover a three-year project in the eight lakes listed above, using the weevils as the means of reducing the EWM infestation. Since the federal program requires a partner, a presentation was made to the City of Greater Sudbury's budget committee. City Council approved 100% of the cost of the project in this year's budget so that if the federal application is unsuccessful, the project could still proceed. If the federal grant is approved, the project will be jointly funded by the Government of Canada and the City of Greater Sudbury.

2. Where has this technique been successful?

The Town of Espanola has been successful in greatly reducing EWM in Clear Lake – their main recreational lake – using EnviroScience Inc.'s weevil program. Espanola Town Council now has plans to implement the technique in Apsey Lake.

3. Are we just introducing an alien species?

No. Milfoil weevils already live in Greater Sudbury's lakes, but in numbers too small to significantly reduce the EWM. EnviroScience Inc. will take weevils from local lakes and breed (or "culture") enough of them to decrease the EWM when placed into the selected lakes. As their food source disappears, their numbers will decline. They will not transfer to another host.

4. Why was EnviroScience Inc. chosen for this project?

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A request for proposal was issued by the City of Greater Sudbury for a solution to this problem. EnviroScience Inc. submitted the successful proposal. The company has patented this process and has shown success in Espanola, southern Ontario and the United States.

5. How are weevils introduced to the lakes?

After large numbers of weevils are grown, divers from EnviroScience will place them in clearly marked areas of EWM in each lake. The number of areas will depend on the size of the lake and the amount of EWM. Work will begin in mid-July and be completed by the fall.

6. What, exactly, are weevils? Are they dangerous or harmful?

Milfoil weevils are the size of a sesame seed and spend their lives in the water eating the stalk of the EWM. They do not fly and are not harmful to anything but Eurasian Watermilfoil. They don't bite. In fact, you will likely never see them or come in contact with them at all.

7. Will the Eurasian Watermilfoil in Greater Sudbury lakes be eradicated?

No. The use of weevils will simply reduce the extent of EWM – this is a EWM abatement program, not an eradication program. As the EWM declines and ceases to dominate the habitat, other native plants will repopulate the lake bed.

8. What can I do to help?

When you move your watercraft and trailer from one water body to another, ensure they are thoroughly clean. Even the smallest fragment of weed stuck to a boat or trailer can enter a new lake, take root and multiply quickly.

Leave a buffer of grass or native plants along your shoreline as a protective habitat for the weevils to overwinter. They move ashore in September or October and return to the water as the ice melts.

Respect the areas that have been populated with weevils. The areas will be marked, so please leave them be.

Join your local Lake Stewardship group and help protect Greater Sudbury's lakes.

9. Where Can I get more information?

<http://enviroscienceinc.com/weevils-at-work-our-latest-projects/>

<http://www.invadingspecies.com/Invaders.cfm?A=Page&PID=12>

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