

August 2016

CLEAR LAKE PLANT CONTROL PROGRAM UPDATE

This year is the first year of a five-year aquatic plant control program on Clear Lake. The program focuses on the control of invasive plants in Clear Lake with the select use of herbicides. The project is being administered by the Clear Lake Association and financed through a special assessment district established by Colfax Township. Below are responses to some commonly asked questions regarding the program.

Who oversees the plant control program?

Plant control activities are coordinated under the direction of an environmental consultant, Progressive AE. Biologists from Progressive AE conduct GPS-guided surveys of the lake to identify problem areas requiring treatments. Detailed treatment maps are then provided to the herbicide applicator.

Who conducts the herbicide treatments?

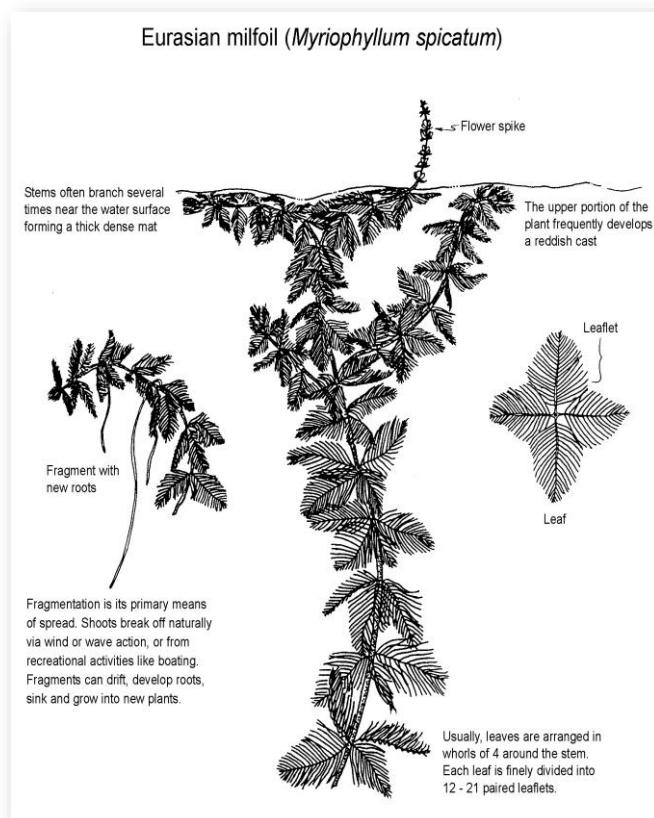
The herbicide treatments are conducted by PLM Lake and Land Management. The herbicide treatment contract is performance-based; the contractor is only compensated for work that is performed satisfactorily.

Who determines when and where treatments will occur?

Treatment timing is largely weather-dependent, and the scope of treatments depends on where nuisance plants are found during Progressive AE's surveys. Treatments are generally conducted early in the active growing season (i.e., May or early June).

What plants are targeted for control?

The primary plant being targeted for control in Clear Lake is Eurasian milfoil. This is a non-native (i.e., exotic) plant that spreads rapidly by fragmentation—small pieces of the plant break off and form new plants. If left unchecked, this plant can spread rapidly throughout the lake. Prior to this year's treatments, Eurasian milfoil infested about 50 acres of Clear Lake. After the treatment in May, milfoil was almost non-existent in the lake. It should be noted that while the plant has been temporarily controlled, it has not been eradicated. Annual surveys and treatments will be required to ensure the plant does



not regain dominance in the lake.

Why are there still plants in the lake following treatments?

In managing aquatic plants, it is important to recognize that most plants are beneficial. Aquatic plants produce oxygen via photosynthesis, help stabilize shoreline and bottom sediments, and provide cover and habitat for a variety of fish. The primary objective of the plant control program on Clear Lake is to control nuisance exotic species while maintaining beneficial native plants. We do not want to remove all the plants in the lake. This would be bad for the fishery and cause a host of other problems such as algae blooms.

Is there a permanent fix to the problem?

If conditions are favorable, aquatic plants will grow. However, there are steps property owners can take to help minimize excessive plant growth in the lake such as limiting the use of lawn fertilizers and maintaining natural vegetation along the shoreline.

How about a pre-emptive strike?

To be effective, aquatic herbicides must be applied directly to the plant beds when the plants are actively growing. There are no pre-emergent herbicides like there are for agriculture.

Are herbicide treatments safe?

The aquatic herbicides that are permitted by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) are registered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. They also undergo toxicological review by the DEQ. In Michigan, aquatic herbicide use requires a DEQ permit. The permit lists herbicides approved for use and respective dose rates. If herbicides are applied according to label instructions and permit requirements, they should pose no danger to public health and the environment.

How do the treatments impact fish?

If applied properly, herbicides have no direct impacts on fish. In general, lakes with a variety of plants often support more productive fisheries. The plant control program in Clear Lake is designed to remove invasive plants while preserving plants that provide valuable habitat and cover for fish.

Why didn't my property get a treatment notice sign?

State regulations require that signs be posted within 100 feet of treatment areas. The signs list the herbicides applied and associated use restrictions. If there is no sign posted along your property, it means your area was not treated and there are no use restrictions. Which properties get treatment depends on where the plants are found during the surveys of the lake. Not every property gets treated every time.

When is it safe to swim after a treatment?

All herbicides have a 24-hour swimming restriction that will be posted on signs along areas of the shore that have been treated. However, if you do not have a sign posted, there are no swimming restrictions.

What about fishing restrictions?

There are no fishing restrictions associated with the treatment program.

When can I water my lawn following a treatment?

If you draw water from the lake for irrigation, be sure to read the sign posted along your shoreline at the time of treatment. Most irrigation restrictions do not apply to established lawns. However, if you water flowers or a garden, adhere to the irrigation restrictions posted on the sign.

What can I do to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Clear Lake?

If you trailer your boat to other lakes, be sure to thoroughly wash your boat, motor, and trailer before launching back into Clear Lake. With exotic species, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!