

INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL FOR PORTAGE LAKE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we need an invasive species control program for Portage Lake? *The PLA funded an Aquatic Vegetative Analysis Survey (AVAS) in October 2008. This survey identified significant growth of 2 invasive plant species in and around our lake. Eurasian watermilfoil was estimated to be 135-150 acres and Phragmites australis was located on about 75% of the shoreline. Many areas throughout the state that did not do a rapid response to the discovery of these invasives are now paying huge dollars to fight them. Examples are the phragmites in the Saginaw Bay area and Eurasian watermilfoil in Houghton Lake. If left untreated, they have the potential to crowd out and eliminate our native plants, upset our ecosystem, change habitats for our fish and birds, block views of the lake, inhibit recreational activities, fire hazard, decreased property values and will be much more expensive to treat in the future.*

The aquatic plant control program that is proposed for Portage Lake is to spot treat with approved systemic herbicides in 2009 if funding can be made available. Total lake treatment, contact herbicides and weevils have been ruled out at this time. The exact herbicide and amount will depend on the type and distribution of the plants that are found with a spring survey and the Department of Environmental Quality permit conditions.

Plant control activities are supported by the PLA, Portage Lake Garden Club, Portage Lake Watershed Board and under the direction of the Onekama Township Board's Management Consultants and Invasive Species Committee. They will be responsible for conducting surveys of the lake to determine the scope of work to be performed, estimating costs, preparing a 5 year budget, scheduling and assisting at public hearings, preparing contract documents for the applicators and assuring the quality of all the work. The consultant and Invasive Species Committee will submit reports to the township board regarding the performance of the plant control applicators and make recommendations to the township board regarding payments to the contractor.

The invasive species plant control program for Portage Lake is proposed to be financed through a special assessment of benefiting properties in accordance with the Township Public Improvements Act (PA 188 of 1954 as amended). Options for the special assessment district for Portage Lake are being evaluated.

What is Eurasian watermilfoil? *Eurasian milfoil (Myriophyllum spicatum) is an aggressive aquatic plant that has infested most of the lakes in Michigan, United States, and much of Canada. As its name implies, Eurasian milfoil is not native to Michigan. It was introduced into the United States from Europe and Asia in the 1940's. It can spread very rapidly by a process called vegetative propagation in which small pieces of the plant break off, take root and grow. It is especially problematic in that it often becomes established early in the growing season as it does not die off in the winter and can live under the ice. It can grow at greater depths than most plants and can form a thick canopy at the lake surface that can degrade fish habitat and seriously hinder recreational activity. Because of its ability to spread by fragmentation, mechanical*

harvesting (in which plants are cut and removed from the lake) is not an effective method of control. In fact, harvesting can actually promote the spread of the plant. Eurasian milfoil can be controlled with herbicides (some of which are selective for milfoil) and, in some lakes, biological control of Eurasian milfoil is being attempted.

What is Phragmites australis? *Phragmites, also known as common reed, is a plant that is native to Michigan. However, the exotic species is a highly invasive wetland grass that ranges in height from 6 to 15 feet tall. They can have up to 80% of the plant underground and roots can go down up to 6 feet. The plant creates dense stands and crowds out other beneficial native wetland vegetation. Phragmites typically grows in wetlands, lake shorelines, roadside ditches and other low, wet areas. The plant spreads rapidly by fragmentation and the extensive root system make it difficult to effectively control. Phragmites is of great concern for lakes where it can block shoreline views and greatly reduce access for swimming and fishing. Phragmites have flat green leaves that alternate along the stem and a distinctive purple-brown seed head with plumes appearing by late July. Phragmites can be controlled using herbicide treatments followed by mechanical removal or a controlled burn and annual maintenance. In Michigan, a permit is likely required to control this species. There is currently no biological control method for Phragmites.*

What has been done? *A demonstration project was held in the summer of 2008 for the control and management of phragmites. When eurasian watermilfoil was discovered in the fall, a subcommittee of the Watershed Executive Board was formed. This committee is now also a committee of the Township Board and is investigating methods for the control and management of all invasive species. They have developed a 5 year management plan and budget. The Township has formed a special assessment district to fund this project. Two public hearing will be held. A lake management company, Lakeshore Environmental Inc., has been hired to assist and do additional lake monitoring. A repeat survey was done in the spring of 2009 to verify the extent of the problem and establish cost estimates.*

Who are the members of this committee? Dan Behring, Herb Lenon, Mary Reed, , Chuck Reed, Jim Simons.

What has this committee done to date? *Reviewed the October survey and the significance of the findings. Analyzed options for treatment. Contacted close to 20 lakes and areas with similar issues. Reviewed literature and contacted experts on options for treatment. Reviewed plans for management and control with the DNR,DEQ. Reported findings and recommendations to the Watershed Executive Committee, PLA, Township and Village. Worked with the Township Board to determine best methods of financing. Interviewed management companies. Conducted 3 educational meetings this spring and summer. Assisted the Township Board at the public hearings. Worked with the lake manager to obtain permits and to interview and hire a certified applicator.s.*

Where can I get more information about what is being done? *You will soon be able to go to the Onekama.info web site and click on Invasive species. Hard copy of the material on the website and other information will also be made available at the Onekama Library and at the Township Office. You may also contact any of the members of the subcommittee.*

What authority does the township have to initiate an ordinance to control and manage invasive species? *Public Improvement Act 188 of 1954 as amended allows townships to make improvements.. One of the types of improvements authorized includes (l) The eradication or control of aquatic weeds and plants.*

How can I stay informed about township actions and decisions. *Onekama.info, PLA Newsletters, Community Education forums, Information in the library. Updates will be published and will be available at the Township Offices.*

What is the time line for 2009? *Repeat Aquatic Vegetative Survey Analysis with a grid survey and GPS points in May 2009. Develop the budget. Ordinance written and posted followed by public hearings. Send out bids to the applicators. Obtain DEQ permit. Treat September 2009.*

Why will there be 2 public hearings? *First hearing July 14, 2009 – Intent of the Program. Focus of this meeting is to discuss the intent of program, not cost. Second hearing August 4th, 2009 -Finalizing the Special Assessment Role. Focus of this meeting is to discuss the tax role, not the intent of the program.*

What treatment options were considered and which option is being recommended? Why was this treatment option recommended? *See questions # 9,10,11,12,14*

When can we expect the first treatment Of The Lake for Eurasian watermilfoil and for phragmites? *Fall of 2009*

What chemicals might be used? *See Question # 17. Also, a newer, more selective, recently approved chemical imazaprox (Clearcast) may be considered.*

If we use chemicals to treat eurasian watermilfoil and phragmites, will there be an affect on humans or fish? *These products have been tested by the EPA and approved by the MDEQ for use in lakes. They will not affect birds, fish or humans. You are encouraged to view the DVD "Why aquatic herbicides affect plants and not you" by Carole Lembi, PhD biologist PurdueUniversity. www.btny.purdue.edu/aquatic/aquaticherb See question # 19.*

I understand that a special assessment district will be established, assessments will be levied on parcels in the special assessment district to pay for the costs of the treatment plan, legal services and lake studies. How was the special assessment district established? *Lakefront owners were assessed according to feet of lakefront. All others in the district were assessed 1/8 of a unit. See First Public Hearing information.*

If we don't assess until the 2009 taxes are collected late in the Year of 2009, How can we treat the Lake in the fall for eurasian watermilfoil and phragmites? *After the special assessment roll for the improvement is confirmed, the township board will negotiate with the applicators to delay payment until the assessment dollars are collected.*

How much will I be assessed in the future? *Initial assessment will be for 5 years. After that time, the needs will be reassessed.*