

Notre-Dame and Usher Lakes Association

Newsletter – Spring 2005

Last March, the Association's interim board received authorization from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife (now known as the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks) to proceed with a pilot project to harvest Eurasian watermilfoil in the spring and the fall in accordance with recommendations made by Paul Hamilton from the Canadian Museum of Nature. The harvest must be undertaken with electric harvesting equipment (the "Jenson Lake Mower") when the milfoil is above the water's surface in the summer (June/July) and the fall (September/October).

Implementation to proceed with the pilot project requires that the following conditions be met:

- all shoreline residents must be informed of the pilot project and its implementation schedule, and be called upon to take any necessary precautions;
- for inspection purposes, the appropriate authorities must be given 48 hours notice of the harvest (the harvest team must have the required permits in hand);
- areas to be harvested (milfoil beds identified in 2004), and the boats used during the harvesting, must be clearly marked and identified;
- the harvest must be undertaken in such a way that it minimizes the disturbance of lake sediments;
- all plant material must be collected and transported away from the lake;
- handling of oil and gas must take place at least 60 metres from the lake's high water mark;
- data collection (water tests and photos) must be undertaken to document, monitor and evaluate the pilot project and its impact on the aquatic plants and the lake; and
- a public information campaign about the need to reduce the input of phosphorous and other nutrients into the lake must be launched.

The first harvest will take place at the beginning of June and will be done by Randy Irwin (owner of the harvester) with the help of several property owners. Each of their boats will be identified with a red flag. After this first harvest, we will be in a better position of assess the work involved.

According to Paul Hamilton, if all the above conditions are met, and if harvesting is done correctly, then we should be able to notice whether the cutting has had a positive impact within a year.

In the interest of all lake residents and property owners, and to ensure that we do not bring about a situation more serious than the one we now face, and to ensure the continuous support of the Ministry and the municipality, it is critical that the harvest be undertaken in accordance with the conditions outlined above and in coordination with the Association who holds the permit. If we do follow these conditions we risk losing all credibility, having our permit revoked and suffering penalties

(fines, confiscation of equipment, etc.), not to mention the further spread of Eurasian watermilfoil.

It is critical to remember that:

- The harvest is being undertaken as a pilot project and must be monitored and evaluated to determine if this technique is appropriate for our lake (irregardless of its effectiveness for the Rideau Canal).
- The harvest is not a “miracle solution” but rather one that allows native aquatic plants to recolonize areas taken over by Eurasian watermilfoil (an introduced species). It is also the least disturbing to the lake’s natural environment.
- The control of Eurasian watermilfoil will not be successful without the implementation of corrective and preventative measures that address the causes of the problem (these have been outlined in an earlier information pamphlet available from the Association).

The first water tests were done at the end of May and will be repeated regularly to develop a water quality database from which we can monitor the impact of the harvest and identify potential problems before they reach alarming levels (presence of algae, zebra mussels, other introduced plant species etc.)

The First Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association

The AGM will take place at the Rupert Community Centre on Saturday, July 2 at 11 a.m. The agenda includes: Report on activities by the Interim Board; Adoption of the Statutes and Bylaws; elections of the Board (7 positions); and a presentation on the program to eradicate the Eurasian watermilfoil.

In response to a request made by members at last August’s meeting, Paul Hamilton from the Canadian Museum of Nature will be available to answer questions about Eurasian watermilfoil and its control. Unfortunately, the Municipality of La Pêche does not have a biologist on staff at this time.

For a complete copy of the Association’s Statutes and Bylaws (available in English only at this time; French version in preparation) as well as an abridged version (available in English and French), please visit our website at:
www.magma.ca/~roblynn/htm/lac_notre-dame.html

We are counting on your support and hope to see you at the AGM.

Interim Board