



# PETOSKEY News-Review

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## Nuisance species invade

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By Marci Singer News-Review Staff Writer

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Area marinas are taking aim at nuisances — aquatic nuisance species that is.

The Petoskey and Harbor Springs city marinas, along with Irish Boat Shop in Charlevoix and Walstrom Marine in Harbor Springs, have applied for permits for the chemical treatment of aquatic nuisance plants including Eurasian milfoil and Phragmites.



“We’re not the only marina in the area to have problems,” Petoskey city parks and recreation director Al Hansen said. “We want to treat the nuisance plants before they flower.”

This is the first year the Petoskey marina will treat for Eurasian milfoil. The director said they are also concerned about Phragmites from Beaver Island.

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“Controlling the nuisance plants early is recommended so they won’t spread throughout the basin,” Hansen said. “We plan to treat roughly five acres of water and will follow treatment recommended by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. We will be using an anti-drift agent so we will be selectively targeting the plants only within that five acre area.”

Harbor Springs harbormaster Mike Johnson said his biggest concern is also milfoil. The Harbor Springs Marina has applied for permits to chemically treat 10,000 square feet of water in the city of Harbor Springs Marina basin.

“Given what I’ve seen in other harbors, water depth will be more of a problem with respect to invasive species. This creates a problem for us when people can’t use their boats in our marina,” Johnson said.

Having worked with Irish Boat Shop in the past and also having done his own research, the Harbor Springs harbormaster opted for chemical treatment this year.

“We are hoping this is a one-time problem with respect to treatment,” he said. “If the problem still exists next year, we may explore biological options such as weevils.”

### **Invasive vs. Nuisance Species**

You don’t have to be a scientist to recognize the damage invasive species inflict on Northern Michigan waters and the Great Lakes.

Nuisance aquatic plants, including aquatic invasive species, can interfere with recreational opportunities and can also create economic hardships for commercial operations located along and within waters of the state, said Eric Bacon of the Aquatic Nuisance Control Program, water bureau division of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

“Aquatic invasive species can also out compete native species within the same area, altering the habitat for local fish, wildlife and other aquatic organisms. In some situations, control of aquatic invasive species helps to prevent the spread to other unaffected areas of the waterbody,” he said.

According to the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act 451, “aquatic nuisance” means an organism that lives or propagates, or both, within the aquatic environment and that impairs the use or enjoyment of the waters of the state.

Aquatic invasive species, on the other hand, are waterborne, non-native organisms that threaten the diversity or abundance of native species, the ecological stability of impacted waters, or threaten a commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activity. The Great Lakes have a long history of aquatic invasive species introductions — both intentional and unintentional — with more than 185 documented species to date and a new species being

discovered, on average, every six to eight months. Some of the common invasive species in Northern Michigan include sea lamprey, zebra mussels and quagga mussels, purple loosestrife, Eurasian watermilfoil, round gobies and rusty crayfish.

Bacon said the primary non-native aquatic plant species targeted is Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed, although along lake margins or wetland areas, purple loosestrife and Phragmites can be a problem as well. The need to treat is generally determined by the property owner who is affected by nuisance aquatic plants, algae and/or swimmer's itch.

"If the department has information to support the area in question does not have nuisance conditions, or has unique circumstances, the request to treat for aquatic nuisances may be denied," he said.

Most permits allow the use of chemicals to get rid of all of the species. Bacon said the products approved for any treatment in waters of the state are approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, registered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and approved for use in Michigan waters by the DEQ. When used in accordance with all necessary permits, and consistent with the product label, they are considered to be safe and effective tools for aquatic nuisance management.

### Chemical Concerns

As an organization supported primarily by shoreline property owners, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council can empathize that excessive plant growth can become a nuisance, and as a result, the desire of property owners to remove it said policy specialist, Jennifer McKay. The council typically reviews 20-30 permit applications a year for the use of chemical treatment to control or manage nuisance aquatic vegetation throughout Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan and Emmet counties.

"We feel there are methods that can both accomplish the project goals of eradicating the nuisances while minimizing adverse impacts to the water resources," she said. "In general, the Watershed Council does not support the use of chemicals for controlling aquatic plants due to the many known negative impacts to the aquatic ecosystem, but perhaps more importantly, because of the unknown effects of releasing chemicals into the water."

McKay said this is especially important given the cumulative impacts or chemical interactions which will inevitably occur within the lake ecosystem.

"Repeated application of chemicals to control aquatic nuisance species may not be suitable due to differing types of aquatic plant growth," she said. "Herbicides may be suitable for spot application, but are not recommended for large infestations because of ecosystem-wide impacts and uncertainties regarding the impacts of chemicals on non-target aquatic organisms and humans."

The council recommends utilizing biological control methods or an integrated approach incorporating biological, physical, and, if absolutely necessary, chemical treatment. However, the council has specific concerns with chemicals such as copper sulfate, 2,4-D, and endothall (Aquathol K) and recommends avoiding these chemicals altogether.

"While the use of copper sulfate is often the chosen method of algae and weed control, the negative impacts of copper sulfate are long-term. Essentially, copper sulfate can produce the desired result of controlling algae at the cost of long-term degradation to the water body," McKay said.

She added that a Michigan DEQ study concluded that aquatically applied endothall and 2,4-D could migrate from surface water into groundwater under certain conditions. More so, persistence of 2,4-D in groundwater could result in an impact to wells located a great distance from the area of herbicide application.

Despite treatment, the policy specialist said once invasive species are introduced into the Great Lakes ecosystem, controlling them is a losing battle.

"Invasive species adversely affect many commercial, agricultural, aquacultural, and recreational activities that rely

heavily on a strong and stable ecosystem,” McKay said. “Prevention is the most protective and cost effective method of preventing damage to the Great Lakes ecosystem from invasive species.”

### **Weevils Prevail**

In addition to advocating for the prevention of the spread of invasive species, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council has effectively been tackling Eurasian watermilfoil since 1998 without chemicals. The presence of Eurasian watermilfoil was discovered when the council performed an aquatic plant survey on Paradise Lake to identify and map the aquatic plants in the lake. To combat the milfoil, a total of 14,300 weevils (beetles) were stocked from 1998 to 2000 and none have been stocked since — the weevils eat Eurasian watermilfoil.

“This was the first lake in the state of Michigan where weevils were used to control Eurasian watermilfoil and it has been incredibly successful,” said monitoring and research coordinator, Kevin Cronk. “Weevils provide a long-term solution without putting potentially dangerous chemicals into our waters and without negatively impacting the aquatic ecosystem.”

Additionally, Cronk said weevils are native to most, if not all of the lakes in the region.

“Stocking weevils basically boosts native populations to bring the predator-prey back into balance,” he said. “If the weevil stocking is successful and balance is achieved, such as has been the case in Paradise Lake, then further stocking is not needed and a long-term solution has been found.”

Cronk said if such a safe biocontrol is available to control an invasive species, it only makes sense, both environmentally and economically, to use it.

“We are very fortunate to have weevils available to help us control Eurasian watermilfoil and hope that research uncovers additional safe biocontrol agents to help control the invasive species problems that are plaguing our lakes and rivers,” he said.

### **Chemical Treatment**

Jack Hodge is vice president and general manager of Irish Boat Shops, just one of the many marinas bothered by Eurasian watermilfoil. This is the first year Irish is treating for the nuisance species at the Charlevoix marina, one of their two locations.

“We have never treated before,” Hodge said. “We are treating because of increasing complaints by our boaters. By midsummer, the milfoils are clogging the customer slips and are a serious nuisance.”

While Hodge has looked into weevils, his organization has determined that the only way to treat Eurasian milfoil is chemically.

“We have looked into weevils, but there is no guarantee that they will have any effect on the native milfoils. And they work quite slowly — years — and are very expensive,” he said. “Mechanical harvesting seems to have opposite of the intended effect. The non-native milfoils come back even stronger than the natives, thus mechanical harvesting can only be considered a short-term measure.”

Hodge said the DEQ has determined the use of chemicals is the most effective way to treat milfoil and that the chemicals have no real impact other than reducing non-native species. Chemical treatment will be determined by the applicator and the conditions at the time of application.

“By my research, non-native milfoils spend the majority of their energy to reproduce and do so incredibly quickly. That also makes them very easy to kill with very mild chemicals,” he said. “Irish Boat Shop is recognized as a Michigan Clean Marina and we do not take the treatment of our Charlevoix harbor lightly.”

### **Clean Marinas**

Irish Boat Shop in Charlevoix is among seven marinas in Charlevoix and Emmet counties that have received the "Clean Marina" designation. Others include the Bay Harbor Marina, the Charlevoix City Marina, the Harbor Springs Municipal Marina, Irish Boat Shop in Harbor Springs, Walstrom Marine in Harbor Springs and the Petoskey City Marina.

Jeff Spencer of Michigan Clean Marinas Environmental Science and Services said that Clean Marinas will not lose their designation unless they were applying a product inconsistent with its packaging requirements or banned substance.

"We expect all our designated marinas to operate at the highest level of environmental stewardship with a focus continual improvement," he said. "The designation is important from the standpoint that it introduces a level of consistency that boaters come to expect from a Clean Marina."

In order to earn the designation, a marina must sign a pledge statement, attend a training event and receive a guidebook, complete a self-evaluation and request a site visit. Designation is approved following a committee review of the checklist.

Spencer said people should be aware and educated about aquatic nuisance species in Michigan.

"Educate yourselves about Great Lakes topics. If you are a boater, learn about the Clean Marinas program and aquatic nuisance species," he said. "This will enable you to ask the right questions and not necessarily assume the worst if someone is treating for aquatic nuisance species. Also be a clean boater and learn how to properly maintain your boat to protect water quality and natural resources."

### **Get Involved and Informed**

In addition to boaters and anglers taking precautions, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's McKay added that citizens can effectively promote protection of water resources by contacting members of Congress and urging them to pass comprehensive aquatic invasive species legislation and by volunteering to identify and locate the presence of invasive species to facilitate management efforts.

With respect to treatment activity, the DEQ's Bacon said it is scheduled based on approval by the DEQ and receipt of a issued permit, plant/algae growth or reported cases of swimmer's itch, product availability, equipment availability, weather conditions and other logistical factors of the licensed commercial applicator or property owner.

"Persons residing or owning property within the areas affected by the treatment activity must be given written notice no later than 45 days, and no sooner than seven days, prior to treatment is planned," he said. "When the treatment is to occur, the areas affected by the treatment must be posted with signs clearly identifying the treatment activity, the products used, water use restrictions imposed on the treated water and the expiration date of the water use restrictions."

For more information about permitting for the chemical treatment of aquatic nuisance plants and/or algae, [click here](#).

For additional information regarding the statute, permit requirements, chemical treatment options or general aquatic nuisance control questions contact the DEQ, Aquatic Nuisance Control Program at (517) 241-7734 or via e-mail at [DEQ-LWM-ANC@michigan.gov](mailto:DEQ-LWM-ANC@michigan.gov), or [click here](#).

To learn more about preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species, contact Emily Finnell at the DEQ, Office of the Great Lakes at (517) 241-7927 or [finnelle@michigan.gov](mailto:finnelle@michigan.gov) or Jennifer McKay at Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council at 347-1181 or [jenniferm@watershedcouncil.org](mailto:jenniferm@watershedcouncil.org).

For information about the Clean Marina Program, contact Jeff Spencer at (517) 241-5719 or at [spencerj3@michigan.gov](mailto:spencerj3@michigan.gov).

Marci Singer ☐ 439-9348 - [msinger@petoskeynews.com](mailto:msinger@petoskeynews.com)

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