

EGLE Lowers the Boom on Frogbit

By Joe Primozich

Since aquatic invasive plants cannot be eliminated, the managing plan this year takes on new options for the Pentwater Lake Improvement Board. The latest Pentwater Lake invasive aquatic plant is frogbit, a mated surface plant with small lily pad like leaves the size of your fingernail. It showed up in the marsh at the east end of the lake as a result of duck hunters transporting it here on their boat trailers. This spring it grew exponentially in the marsh and covered about 4 acres. This led to a partnership between EGLE, the former DEQ, the Pentwater Lake Association, and the Pentwater Lake Improvement Board to manage the frogbit.

With the warm growing season this summer, the frogbit went unchecked until in late August it began to break up into floating mats and move under the bridge and out into Pentwater Lake. Two activities accelerated this frogbit mat movement. A heavy rain event or a water rise in Lake Michigan causing a surge into the marsh would break off mats and start them moving into our lake. A volunteer group in Apache Hills of 8 helped direct 5 tons of frogbit for removal by using a backhoe to move it to waiting trailers, so it could be delivered into an upland field for tilling under. Other riparians raked and lifted frogbit at dock side. The PLA hired 3 high school students to assist with this. Finally, a discussion between a PLA lead group and EGLE representative, Bill Kaipers, developed a plan to move forward. EGLE asked for the PLA lead group of Rich Pugsley, Tom Walter, and Joe Primozich to help capture the floating frogbit mats so they did not leave the lake through the channel or at the ramps on trailers. On August 18th, EGLE toured the lake and found 30 sites of shoreline frogbit and removed 400#. Next summer they will return to those areas and treat them with riparian permission. The PLA hired Brandon Macher, a student, to fly a drone on the village creek to look for frogbit. EGLE welcomed the help and the survey resulted in no frogbit being found.

EGLE then proposed to put in a floating 16" deep boom on the river mouth, upstream of longbridge. The permit was applied for by the PLIB with Rich Pugsley being the lead on the application form and Joe Primozich signing off for the PLIB. With the permit done on October 3rd, the boom was placed until October 15th, the end of the permit period. This is the end of the frogbit growing season. Rich Pugsley and Tom Walter were leads on this with EGLE and helped to monitor the boom net for this period. The working partnership achieved its goals. No new mats of frogbit moved down into the lake or out of the channel. The ramp at the red barn on the north branch was full of duck hunters and fisherman this month, so hope they will abide by the postings to clean their boats and trailers of all vegetation.

EGLE is in discussion now to use a 2 step management program next year for Pentwater Lake for frogbit. One is to set the boom in late August to trap the floating frogbit mats. Second is to see if they can get a harvester for lifting and removal of the frogbit. This would look like the Aquarius harvesters seen on our lake this year for starry stonewort. So mechanical harvesting will be dominating the management of our two new invasives both starry stonewort and frogbit. Noting this, our regional DNR fisheries manager, Mark Tonello, has complimented the PLIB for its lake management program as the

panfish are growing in numbers and maintaining themselves since a low in 2008, when few bluegills and sunfish were seen dockside. The takeaway from this year is that lake conditions are changing, but with surveillance, the lake is being managed with the latest mechanical means, the harvester and the boom.