

DNR, northern lakes group make progress against aquatic invasive plant

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EDGEWATER, Wis. ❖ A three-year cooperative project funded by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is helping a Sawyer County lakes group make important progress in ongoing control of curly leaf pondweed in Lake Chetac.

After two years of treatments, surveys taken at the end of 2014 indicate an 82 percent reduction in the 90-acre area of the lake targeted for herbicide application. Alex Smith, DNR lakes biologist for the region, said the survey work also documented an increase in the growth of native plants in the Sawyer County lake.

"This measurable progress highlights the importance of public-private partnerships in attacking the challenges posed by aquatic invasive species," Smith said.

The work was carried out by the Big Chetac and Birch Lakes Association, which was awarded the \$164,000 grant in 2013. Bill Miller, president of Big Chetac and Birch Lakes Association, said before the treatment began, surveys documented five native aquatic plant species in the affected area, while there were eight native species present following the treatment.

The treatments did not have any negative effect on the lake's fish population, which includes a variety of panfish as well as northern pike and walleye. Panfish abundance has continued to increase and there is no indication fish are avoiding the treated area.

Miller said an additional goal of the management effort is to reduce the potential for toxic blue green algae blooms. Curly pondweed is a significant source of phosphorus in the lake system and contributes to the blooms.

Next steps for the group will involve study of long-term options to control the curly leaf pondweed and other habitat improvement efforts. To learn more about the results, along with the full technical monitoring reports, visit DNR.wi.gov and search for "Lake Chetac."