

**LAKE MINNETONKA CONSERVATION DISTRICT (LMCD)
2008 Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) Final Harvesting Report
(September 17, 2008)**

A. Harvesting season data and harvesting condition summary:

1. Harvesting Season- The 2008 season consisted of 35 working days, commencing on Monday, June 23rd and ending on Friday, August 15th. The season was planned to start on the week of June 9th; however, it was postponed due to the lack of EWM growth (see attached 6/13/08 Press Release for further details). The total number of working days in 2007 was 38, with 43 working days in 2006 and 2005. Two other contributing factors to the reduction in working days in 2008 included: 1) three days of harvesting cancelled due to the July 4th holiday, and 2) two days of harvesting cancelled due to staffing limitations, in particular supervision. The crew operated the three LMCD harvesters and high-speed transport barge five days a week for eight hours during the 2008 season.
2. Water Level- Lake levels during the course of the 2008 season were slightly higher compared to 2007. The lake level on the first day of the 2008 season was 929.53', compared to 929.24' in 2007. The highest lake level during the 2008 season was 929.53' on June 23rd, compared to a highest lake level of 929.24' on June 13th during the 2007 season. The lowest lake level during the 2008 season was 929.53' on August 14th, compared to a lowest lake level of 928.19 on August 10th in 2007.
3. Acres Harvested- Total acreage harvested in 2008, including second harvests, has not been finalized to date. Acres harvested during a season have been computed since 2003 utilizing a Global Positioning System and Geographic Information System software. When this draft Report was prepared for review by the LMCD Board of Directors, LMCD staff had not finalized this statistic. It should be ready by the 10/8/08 EWM/Exotics Task Force Meeting.
4. Harvester and Truck Loads- The total number of harvester loads in 2008 was 192.50, which generated 97.00 truck loads or 2.77 truck loads per day (see attached spreadsheets for further details). This compares to a total number of harvester loads of 288.25 in 2007, which generated 148.00 or 3.89 truck loads per day. In 2008, the total number of harvester loads decreased by approximately 33 percent and the total number of truck loads decreased by approximately 34 percent compared to 2007. There appears to be three main contributing factors to these significant decreases. First, the reduction in working days from 38 to 35. Second, it appears that the cooler weather in May had a significant impact on early season EWM growth. Third, the 2008 coordinated herbicide treatment project on Carmans, Grays, and Phelps Bays was a contributing factor because harvesting was not conducted on these three bays and they have historically contributed significantly to harvester and truck load statistics.

B. Operating Highlights

Harvesting priorities were based upon impediment to public boat navigation on the open water, with higher priority given to areas of the lake that were matted. Although there were some areas of the lake with significant milfoil growth that was not aesthetically pleasing, we generally did not harvest them unless they were impeding public boat navigation (i.e. Grays Bay along the 101 Causeway).

The LMCD has assembled a rotating harvesting schedule for Lake Minnetonka (see attached spreadsheet for further details). In 2008, the Lower Lake South Option was planned. However, the harvesting crew slightly deviated from the Lower Lake South Option because of the lack of EWM in the bays early on the schedule. Similar to past seasons, a combination of clear-cutting and channel-cutting was utilized to address harvesting priorities. All areas that dictated the need for harvesting were cut at least once, with high growth areas harvested twice as time permitted.

Public response to the harvesting in general was encouraging, with a limited number of telephone calls from the public. Harvested milfoil was mainly composted at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, with occasional loads composted either at the Leuther Farm or Gale Woods Park. These three sites are a convenient distance from Lake Minnetonka, generally less than 10 miles from most offload sites.

C. Personnel

Judd Harper served his eighth year as Project Manager in 2008. Jeff Schmidt returned in 2008 for his sixth year with the program and third year as Site Supervisor. To assist Schmidt, Mike Carls returned for his fourth year with the program and second year as Assistant Site Supervisor position. An additional five employees were hired to round out the four seasonal crew positions for the 2008 season, with a mixture of new and returning seasonal employees. Overall, the supervisors and harvesting crew should be commended for their efforts and a number of them have communicated an interest in returning to the program in 2009.

D. Equipment Operation and Maintenance

The LMCD contracted with Curfman Trucking and Repair, Inc. for their eighth year for maintenance of the EWM harvesting equipment. The efforts made by Curfman Trucking and Repair the past eight years has resulted in improved efficiency and decreased downtime.

E. Status of EWM Harvesting Equipment

In 2008, the harvesting equipment consisted of three paddlewheel harvesters and a used high-speed transport barge purchased from Aquarius Systems in 2003 to improve the efficiency of the program. The three paddlewheel harvesters were purchased prior to the 2000, 2003, and 2005 seasons. 2008 season was the third year that the used high-speed transport barge was available to support the transporting of vegetation from the harvest site to the off-load site. The primary goal of the high speed transport barge was to increase the

amount of work time (primarily harvesting time), and to decrease the amount of down time (primarily on site travel time). Statistics were collected for the first year on this in 2008 and will be further refined for comparison purposes in 2009.

F. 2008 EWM Harvesting Program Budget Analysis

The overall budget for the 2006 EWM Harvesting Program was \$114,000. Expenses incurred through mid September are approximately \$92,000. There are a number of other expenses that were incurred during the 2008 season in which invoices have not been received and paid. These should likely be resolved in the next 30 to 60 days. A MN DNR grant of \$39,000 has been secured to offset expenses incurred during the 2008 season.

H. Conclusions

The 20th year of the EWM Harvesting Program represents an accomplishment that was only envisioned as a fond dream back in 1988. The investment in equipment and personnel has put the LMCD in the forefront of managing milfoil. Mechanical harvesting has earned its place as an effective milfoil control method. The LMCD Board is to be credited for its active support of the harvesting program in the face of periodic skepticism or outright objections. The member cities are to be credited for their commitment and funding of the program all these years. Additionally, the MN DNR, the Three Rivers Park District, the U of M Division of Fisheries, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are to be recognized for their cooperative partnership since the inception of the milfoil harvesting program on Lake Minnetonka.