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Whitmore Lake Improvement Project_pressrelease

"Whitmore Lake Improvement Project Update"
3/15/2006

As the cool, cloudy days of spring give way to the long, sunny warm days of summer, residents begin to look forward to enjoying boating, skiing, fishing and swimming on our crown jewel; Whitmore Lake. The Whitmore Lake Water Quality Advisory Board met on March 7 at the Public Safety Building to discuss the results of the 2005 lake management activities as well as the planned 2006 management activities and the renewal of the Whitmore Lake Improvement Project. The 2006 outlook for boating, swimming and fishing this summer is outstanding.

Overall, our lake is a strong living and evolving aquatic ecosystem with low nutrient levels and high biodiversity and species richness values. However, new threats are emerging. These emerging threats are the hybridization of invasive and native aquatic plants and State of Michigan restrictions on management and treatment methods, which we as a community must continue to address.

Last summer, two selective contact herbicides and an algaecide along with mechanical harvesting were utilized to manage the aquatic vegetation of the lake. Unlike 2004, where the treatment focused exclusively on Eurasian Water Milfoil, the 2005 management activities focused on native aquatic plants that grew at nuisance levels.

The 2005 water quality and fisheries study found that phosphorus and nitrogen levels of the lake were extremely low, especially when compared to other Southeast Michigan lakes. Additionally, the biodiversity of the lake continued to increase, water clarity measurements remained high and the fishery is slowly improving.

The planned lake management activities for this summer include application of aquatic herbicides to 200 acres to control re-emerging Eurasian Water Milfoil and Broadleaf Pondweed in June and the harvesting of 80 acres in July. The annual water quality study and fishery evaluation will also be conducted. Residents will be notified about the aquatic herbicide applications through an advertisement in the Courant and postings placed along lake front properties.

Dr. Douglas Pullman, President of the Aquest Corporation and project consultant, discovered the re-emergence of Eurasian Water Milfoil within 24% of the sample areas. He also tested the collected samples and the results suggest the hybridization of the milfoil. What this means is that the genetic make-up of the Whitmore Lake milfoil is changing into a more resilient type of milfoil. Pullman continued by stating that the Curly Pondweed and Chara (native plants) may also be undergoing a change but additional testing is needed to be certain. To add injury to insult, treatment of these hybrids is constrained by current state restrictions on treatment methods which make managing aquatic vegetation in Whitmore Lake difficult and necessary.

What does this mean for us? It means that we must continue our lake management activities into the future to combat the spread of invasive hybrids and other nuisance species which compromise the health and use of our valuable resource. Dr. Pullman stated that the management of Whitmore Lake needs to continue or the lake will return to pre-management conditions or worse.

The Whitmore Lake Improvement Project is a three-year special assessment project between Northfield Township, Green Oak Township and the Washtenaw County Board of Public Works. The project is intended to control growth of Eurasian Water Milfoil and other invasive and nuisance species as well as to improve the overall health of the lake. This project will expire at the end of 2006. This summer a community meeting will be scheduled to discuss the process of continuing this project. Continuing the project will require support and

action by the Northfield Township Board, Green Oak Township Board and the Washtenaw County Board of Public Works.

Whitmore Lake residents can do their part to help keep the lake clean by using zero phosphorous fertilizers, carefully storing and disposing of household chemicals and cleaning up after their pets. Landscaping with native plants along the shoreline improves the ecological value of the lakeshore by enhancing wildlife habitat (cover and food) and buffers the lake from edge effects (potential negative influences from the use of the property.) Lastly, lakefront residents planning on installing a new seawall should consider a boulder seawall which creates aquatic habitat for macroinvertebrates and plankton that improves the fishery.

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