LAKE MINNETONKA CONSERVATION DISTRICT (LMCD)
2015 Final Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) Harvesting Program Report

A. Harvesting season data and conditions summary:

1. Harvesting Season- The 2015 season consisted of approximately eight weeks starting on Tuesday, June 16th, and ending on Thursday, August 13nd. The length of the season was 31 working days. This was less than the 33 day season in 2014. The crew operated three LMCD harvesters and transport barge four days a week, 10 hours a day the majority of the season.

2. Water Level- Lake levels during the course of the 2015 season were significantly lower than 2014. Lake levels during the course of the 2014 season were at record levels. In fact, the LMCD initiated an emergency high water ordinance (entire lake minimum wake restrictions) from 6/6/14 to 7/25/14. The high lake levels contributed to the low EWM growth in the beginning of the summer of 2014 but increased in the end of the season.

3. Acres Harvested- Total acreage harvested in 2015 was 576. This compares to 391 in 2014, 267 in 2013, 412 in 2012, 268 in 2011 and 384 acres harvested in 2010. Acres harvested during a season have been calculated since 2003 utilizing Global Positioning System and Geographic Information System software. In 2015, there were seven bays identified for large scale herbicide treatments. These bays included Phelps, Grays, Gideons, St. Albans, North Arm, Carsons and St. Louis Bays. Mechanical harvesting was not conducted in some of these areas due to the herbicide treatments. Staff worked with Lake Minnetonka Association (LMA) to coordinate harvesting within the bays that have been or would be chemically treated. There was improved communication and coordination with the LMA in 2015.

4. Harvester and Truck Loads- The total number of harvester loads in 2015 was 290.25, which generated 155 truck loads or 5 per day. (see attached spreadsheet for further details). This compares to a total number of harvester loads of 308.5 in 2014, which generated 162 truck loads or 4.91 per day. This also compares to a total number of harvester loads of 203.25 in 2013, which generated 114 truck loads or 4.38 per day.

B. Operating Highlights

Harvesting priorities were based upon impediment to boat navigation on the lake, with higher priority given to areas of the lake were EWM has matted. Although there were some areas of the lake with significant EWM growth that was not aesthetically pleasing, we generally did not harvest them unless they were impeding boat navigation. There was a high emphasis in recovering EWM fragments. This was done through utilizing one of the harvesters as a skimmer at times. Another technique that was used was emphasizing tandem cutting and returning to areas the following day and skimming the areas with the harvesters.

The LMCD has assembled a rotating harvesting schedule for Lake Minnetonka (see attached schedule for further details). In 2015, the North Upper Lake Option

was implemented. Throughout the season, the LMCD communicated with the LMA to ascertain if harvesting was appropriate in bays that were involved in coordinated herbicide treatments. In 2015 Harper worked with Judd Brackett with the LMA which improved the overall coordination between the two organizations. There were some bays that the LMA advised the LMCD could harvest if warranted. (St. Louis, Carsons, Phelps and North Arm). Carmans Bay was not involved in a coordinated herbicide treatment in 2015 and the LMCD received several calls from residents in the bay asking for harvesting in the bay to assist in navigation. The LMCD spent a great deal of time harvesting in the bay after not harvesting in the bay for several years and received favorable input from residents of the bay. This added 51 acres to the total amount of harvested areas than in past years.

Similar to past seasons, a combination of clear-cutting and limited channel-cutting was utilized to address harvesting priorities. This year there was a high emphasis on tandem cutting when possible. 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 was encouraging, with a limited number of telephone calls from the public. Harvested EWM was mainly composted at two Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) sites. LMCD staff has worked closely with TRPD staff to utilize Gale Woods Farm and Noerenberg Gardens as compost sites because of the close proximity to Lake Minnetonka. The recent change to utilize Noerenberg Gardens has improved trucking efficiency. With the discovery of Zebra Mussels on Lake Minnetonka, LMCD staff decided to no longer use the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum as a compost site to reduce the risk of the spread of zebra mussels to uninfested water bodies. Prior to 2010, the Arboretum was used as the primary compost site.

C. Personnel

Judd Harper served his 15th year as Project Manager in 2015. Tom Elmer served as the EWM Site Supervisor for the second year in 2015. An additional five employees were hired for the 2015 season, which included one returning and four new seasonal employees.

D. Equipment Operation and Maintenance

The LMCD contracted with Curfman Trucking and Repair, Inc. for their 14th year providing maintenance of the EWM harvesting equipment.

E. 2015 EWM Harvesting Program Budget Analysis

The overall budget for the 2014 EWM Harvesting Program was $95,000. Estimated expenses incurred through October are approximately $85,000. There will be other expenses incurred for post season work in which invoices have not been received and paid. Funding for this program comes from a combination of levies from the 14 member cities and a grant of $30,000 from the MN DNR.