

LMCD AIS Harvesting Program Review Meeting Meeting Notes

Date: October 19, 2018

Location: LMCD Office and Phone Call-In

Attendees: According to the Attendance Sign in Sheet and phone introductions the following individuals were in attendance: Bill Cook, LMCD; Matthew Cook, LMCD Staff; Jane Dauffenbach, Aquarius; Jay Green, LMCD; Eric Fieldseth, MCWD; Ann Hoelscher, LMCD; Christine Hokkala-Kuhns, MN DNR; Gary Hughes, LMCD; Gabriel Jabbour, Tonka Bay Marina; Dennis Klohs, LMCD; Keegan Lund, MN DNR; Steve Nielsen, Carman Bay; Rob Roy, LMA; Vickie Schleuning, LMCD Staff; Sue Shuff, LMCD; Brian Vlach, TRPD; and Jake Walesch, LMCD.

The following is a summary of the discussion of this meeting including the agenda items, questions, and responses.

Purpose:

The purpose of the meeting is to explore the LMCD harvesting program, current science, and public perceptions as it relates to Lake Minnetonka.

Overview of the 2018 LMCD Program:

A very brief overview was provided, but the details of the current program were not entertained at this time due to time. The priority of the discussion was to gain context about various aspects of harvesting to be considered as part of the LMCD harvesting program review.

Science, Research, and Studies:

Insufficient data exists to address all the variables required to determine the effectiveness or impact of harvesting programs over time. More details are provided throughout the minutes.

Advantages of Harvesting:

Harvesting provides instant results and removes vegetation from the lake. More details are provided throughout the minutes.

MNDNR --The harvesting program is a mowing operation that cuts targeted invasive vegetation (Curly-leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil) and collects the majority cuttings for disposal. Capture of some native species occurs in this process and is unavoidable, reasonable, and within permit requirements. However, the majority vegetation should be dominated by the target invasive plant.

Benefits of mechanical harvesting are that nuisance vegetation is immediately removed. Drawbacks of harvesting is that multiple cuttings (trips) may be required in a growing season. Also with harvesting is the increased potential to spread invasive species within a lake and beyond if not decontaminated properly. However, natural processes and human activity also spread plants and other invasives within a lake. Harvesters could exacerbate starry stonewort spread, and possibly exacerbates flowering rush

spread in Lake Minnetonka. There is also small fish and invertebrate mortality associated with harvesting.

Benefits of invasive plant management with herbicides is that treatment effects may be longer lasting (one growing season or beyond) and may be more cost effective. In addition, there is less chance with herbicide methods to spread invasives within or beyond a lake. Drawbacks of herbicides is that treatments can fail and that results often take 2-4 weeks. Lakewide herbicide treatments also pose higher risk if done incorrectly to the plant community.

Jabbour stated he does not agree and asked about fishing boats, volume of boats at Grays Bay Marina, and bay to bay spread of AIS especially starry stonewort.

Lund stated that these are separate issues from a harvesting program. The key issues to address are:

1. Effectiveness of harvesting versus alternatives,
2. Risk factors of harvesting, and
3. Monitoring and response efforts to address any introduction of new AIS such as starry stonewort

Schleuning stated that more details about sensitive or AIS areas would be beneficial, even starting by compiling the information available by the various resources. A more focused approach to harvesting and monitoring vegetation has been implemented and staff has relied on the state's expertise for assistance in identifying suspicious species. They have been discussing Lake Master Plans for specific subjects including AIS.

MCWD. Fieldseth stated it is important to form a baseline of vegetation in the lake. MCWD tries to get out 1 to 2 times per year to conduct early detection monitoring around various public accesses. Our searching for starry stonewort has typically been towards late summer to early fall, when starry stonewort would typically be most abundant based on its lifecycle.

Lund encourages funding of a strong monitoring program. Harvesting isn't the risk; the risk is not looking for starry stonewort and other AIS. A pilot could be established to develop and review the impact of harvesting. It was mentioned that the options are to:

1. Harvest,
2. Do nothing,
3. Use herbicides/chemicals, or
4. A combination of harvesting and herbicides to contrast these areas.

A map of vegetation of the whole lake would be beneficial but could be expensive for the initial development. MN DNR requires and obtains vegetation delineations for each of the LID areas. An LMVP is required for chemical treatments beyond 15% littoral limit. MCWD has monitored plants in the Lake. Direct treatment prices vary as it was mentioned from \$15,000-\$20,000 in Carsons, and North Arm treatment at \$50,000.

Klohs mentioned that this debate about harvesting has been going on for years and the debate needs to stop. The same concerns were raised in the past and the information that is available does not support them. No viable alternatives or solutions have been presented. The harvesting program could provide an opportunity for important AIS early detection and response.

TRPD. Vlach stated that TRPD uses a coordinated lake-wide management plan looking at the goals of long-term and immediate relief. It operates mechanical harvesters, along with other AIS management tools, but maintain some lakes as “natural lakes”. They believe their harvesting program provides a short-term recreation improvement and protects other lakes. They have managed curly-leaf pondweed successfully with harvesting compared to chemical treatments. Their harvesting focuses on piers, ramps and docks, etc. It is another tool in the toolbox.

Lund stated there could be more coordination for AIS lake-wide and it would take more effort due to the size and complexity. It is such a great lake and there could be a full-time position where the LMCD, as a governmental agency, would be appropriate to lead these efforts.

Nielsen stated he supported overall lake management. A lake-wide improvement district could charge \$200 per resident to address milfoil and CLP. \$80,000 for harvesting is a small portion and part of the toolbox.

Green thanked everyone for attending and sharing their expertise, experiences, and thoughts. The information will be passed along to the board for consideration.