Lake Steward Report 2024

Invading Species

Drag and Spruce Lakes have, generally, escaped the environmental degradation experienced by other lakes. The water quality is good and much of the shoreline is intact. The upstream water shed is largely undeveloped so Drag and Spruce do not 'take in' degraded water and invading species from upstream. The goal of the Lake Steward program is to keep it this way.

The most significant issues facing the lakes are invading species, shoreline degradation and failed septic tanks. Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) is of current concern, but other damaging species can be introduced. Eurasian Watermilfoil began as a few small patches that grew into large patches and has migrated to many sites. The township is conducting septic tank inspections to identify those that are not performing adequately. This said, even newly installed septic systems can fail with excessive use.

Other invading species of concern are the Chinese Mystery Snail, invasive carp and the Phragmites Plant. There is no evidence of Mystery Snails, yet, however we should all be vigilant and report any sightings (see the association web site. Phragmites are the plants that grow on the side of roads and highways and can become the dominant plant on lake shores and wet lands. We are aware of one site, in the pond near the Sandy Cove boat launch. It's early enough to manage and hopefully these plants can be eradicated. Reports from other lakes suggest that eradication of sites identified early is possible but is still a multi-year task.

Eurasian Water Milfoil

Eurasian Water Milfoil has the ability to significantly harm Drag and Spruce. Since 2017 the Eurasian Milfoil Working Group, initiated by Bert Bicknell and Mike Podmore and subsequently headed by Jim Miners, has mounted a concerted program to manage EWM.

The group has raised funds, consulted EWM experts, researched EWM control measures, and has sought the advice of other lake associations who had experience with EWM. The group chose a course of action that included hiring commercial divers to lay 'benthic' mats over some EWM beds and hand harvest plants at some sites.

The group must obtain permission from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for each season's program and the program must observe Department of Labor regulations.

The Working Group's efforts have slowed the proliferation of EWM, but have not yet stopped it. Without their efforts, the situation would likely be much worse.

One thing that we can all do is to avoid power driving power boats into EWM outbreaks. EWM can settle and start new growths from fragments of plants cut by power boat motors. The yellow marker buoys are in place to mark EWM patches and are not there to act as channel markers.

The Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program

The Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program is run by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Its goal is to educate boaters on ways to stop the transfer of invading species between waterways. One initiative is the Clean, Drain, Dry program that works to educate boaters who move their crafts between waterways on ways to stop the introduction of invading species

For the past two years representatives from the program have held a Clean-Drain Dry demonstration and invading species seminar at the Sandy Cove boat launch on the week end after the August Civic Holiday. They bring a demonstration boat and samples of invading species, both plants and animals, and do an excellent job educating both adults and children.

This year, the event is planned for the same week end this August. The details will be posted on the DSLPOA web site as August approaches. They also provided signs that have been posted at boat launches on Drag and Spruce.

U-Links Projects

The DSLPOA has engaged with the U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research, in recent years, through both their Community-Based Education (CBE) and Woodlands & Waterways EcoWatch (WWEW) programs. Through U-Links "university and college students are matched with community organizations in the Haliburton area to assist them with research, planning, or community service and development projects". U-Links has facilitated completion of numerous research projects for DSLPOA including: Best Practices for Lake Monitoring and Management, Eurasian Watermilfoil - Distribution and Community Interactions. Weevils: A Farming Feasibility Study, and Methods for the Control of Eurasian Watermilfoil in Drag and Spruce Lakes There are currently two ongoing initiates: Water Quality Monitoring and Benthic Monitoring. Both gather data over a number of years that are indicators lake health. The intent is to provide a view of lake health and an early warning of lake health degradation. We are also working with U-Links to initiate other programs.

The Water Quality Monitoring program measures water temperature and oxygen concentration at one meter intervals at two sites on Drag and on Spruce. These occur in early and late summer and in late winter. This winter the ice conditions were such that only one site on Drag was measured.

The Benthic Testing program will start this fall. It is a formal program that will collect samples of bottom sediment at a number of sites. These samples are examined and the numbers of up to twenty seven types of creatures are counted. This is also to be conducted over a number of years. The reduction in numbers of some or the increase in numbers of others can also provide an early indication of a change in lake health.