

From: Schock, Riley L. RLS (6109) **On Behalf Of** Godar, Thomas TG (6064)
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2015 10:41 AM
To: 'heidi.bunk@wisconsin.gov'
Cc: Godar, Thomas TG (6064); 'aronasoc@tds.net'; 'bruceTRC@wi.rr.com'; 'mej2548@yahoo.com'; 'DSchriver@aol.com'; 'cawilson755@yahoo.com'
Subject: Starry Stonewort

Dear Ms. Bunk:

I am the Secretary for the Okauchee Lake Management District (“OLMD”). Okauchee Lake is a twelve hundred acre lake in western Waukesha County, and one of twenty or more lakes in the “lake country” area of Waukesha County. We have an active Lake Management District working closely with the DNR to maintain and enhance the quality of Okauchee Lake, not only for its aquatic life, but for its many riparian and visiting users.

OLMD has become very alarmed with the introduction of a new invasive aquatic plant, Starry Stonewort. As perhaps you know, Starry Stonewort is now in one lake in Racine County, Long Lake, and two lakes in Waukesha County, Little Muskego and Big Muskego. It is also now in Silver Lake in Washington County. Our consultant, Kathy Aron, informs us that this is an incredibly aggressive and pernicious invasive species. It was only first reported in Wisconsin lakes in the fall of 2014, and has already made its way to three other lakes. In Michigan, it was first identified in inland lakes in 2006, and affects more than 200 of its inland lakes.

This invasive species creates macrophyte meadows which form dense benthic barriers and it alters or eliminates native submerged aquatic plants. It prevents access to fish spawning substrate, and eliminates optimal growth habitat for fish fry. Essentially, without very aggressive action, it can create a thick mat of aquatic plant matter, choking out other aquatic plants and fish habitat from a depth of less than 1 foot to more than 15 feet, and can be so thick that it would disturb and even prevent boat travel.

Our research suggests that aggressive management of those lakes in which Starry Stonewort is now occurring is absolutely necessary. However, there seems to be no consistency in this approach from our Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Every indication is that knocking down all aquatic plants near launch sites, and aggressive policing of boats leaving lakes which may have been infested with this invasive plant, is absolutely necessary, less we go down the path of Michigan. Notices should be posted at all launches, and an aggressive campaign of information must follow. That means that the “watch and see” attitude, which seems to be the attitude taken by at least some in the local management areas, such as WDNR staff conducting Informational Meetings in our area, must be challenged. A more aggressive stance is to allow lakes to use traditional chemical treatment to knock down Starry Stonewort so it is less likely to be caught in the propellers, and broken off to be transported or grow in areas of the launches. While this has been approved in Racine County there is no overall plan to combat this aggressive invasive plant.

The value the myriad lakes bring in Waukesha County (and throughout the state) is nearly incalculable, but certainly both the value of the property, the taxes that property owners pay, as well as the overall tourist value of the southeastern Wisconsin lakes has to be measured

in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Starry Stonewort, if not aggressively challenged, threatens these lakes, and threatens it not for a week or a year, but for generations to come.

Please know that OLMD is not an alarmist organization, but our being charged with stewardship over our incredible resource is fueling a need to demand prompt, deliberate, and decisive action by the DNR. At worst, the DNR should be getting out of the way of preventing aggressive treatment of Starry Stonewort with appropriate chemical treatments, and allowing the use of the emergency grants to combat this problem.

Please feel free to contact me or our aquatic consultant, Kathy Aron, aronasoc@tds.net or 262-514-3234, for further information.

Very truly yours,

Thomas Godar

From: Wakeman, Robert S - DNR [mailto:Robert.Wakeman@wisconsin.gov]

Sent: Friday, August 21, 2015 4:05 PM

To: Godar, Thomas TG (6064)

Cc: Thiede, Kurt A - DNR; Bruhn, Michael L - DNR; Stevens, Patrick K - DNR; Ebersberger, Eric K - DNR; Budzinski, John M - DNR; Schaal, Carroll - DNR; Bunk, Heidi J - DNR; Francar, Samantha K - DNR

Subject: Starry stonewort management in SE Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Godar,

Thank you for your email expressing your concerns over the current management of Starry stonewort in Southeast Wisconsin to Secretary Cathy Stepp, she has asked me to respond. I share your concerns and support your interest in doing everything we can do to prevent the spread of all aquatic invasive species (AIS).

I understand the sense of urgency that a new aquatic invasive species can generate especially if it is in a neighboring lake. Nobody wants to get another Eurasian Water-milfoil or Zebra mussel in their lake.

Our statewide strategy to combat AIS is simple. Our number one goal is to prevent the arrival of all aquatic invasive species to Wisconsin. This is accomplished through a comprehensive AIS education and outreach program that targets a variety of "pathways" that are used to bring these invasive species into our state. For those species that are already present our goal is to prevent their spread, we want to contain infestations. Early detection of AIS is critical, which is why we have implemented an AIS monitoring program across the state and have strongly supported the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network, both designed to find new infestations quickly so they can be targeted for control. For established populations of AIS, eradication is seldom possible, so we strive to control the impact they have on our lakes. Sometime management is possible (Eurasian Water-milfoil) sometimes it's not (Zebra mussels).

How early an AIS is found in a lake can determine what management actions are available. For example, the Starry stonewort infestation in Big Muskego Lake has been there for several years and is very extensive; therefore eradication is very unlikely and management will be difficult. The infestation in Silver Lake in Washington County is believed to be limited to the boat launch so an effort is being taken to physically remove the plant with a suction harvesting device.

The use of aquatic herbicides at boat launches to eliminate aquatic vegetation is a reasonable approach to minimize the spread of AIS from lakes. This can be considered at boat launches because the loss of any native aquatic plants will be minimal.

A broad or large scale application of aquatic algaecides (Copper) and herbicides (Hydrothol) for the control of Starry stonewort beyond launch areas is not supported in Wisconsin because it significantly damages native aquatic plant species and has not killed or prevented the spread of Starry stonewort within lakes in Michigan and Indiana. Elimination of native species through chemical treatment can actually lead to the spread of invasive species by creating areas of lake bed void of vegetation. Invasive species such as starry stonewort are quickly able to recolonize lake bed areas that are void of native aquatic vegetation.

The "wait and see" strategy was discussed at the public informational meetings because there is Wisconsin based research that shows that not all AIS will dominate a lake and our early management may make things worse. The Department presented this information at the public meetings to provide

those in attendance with a broad spectrum of approaches that can be considered, not because the Department has adopted this approach.

Prior to the arrival of Starry stonewort to southeastern Wisconsin, every public launch has been posted with signs that reminded boaters about the AIS laws which require boaters to inspect boats and trailers, remove mud and vegetation, drain water and never move live fish from a launch. In addition, the Department has developed a Rapid Response Framework to prepare for new AIS in Wisconsin. This Framework has been approved by the Federal government and guides our response actions when new AIS discoveries are made.

Since the discovery of Starry stonewort in Little Muskego Lake the Department has been very active in working with the affected lake management groups to develop and implement a rapid response plan for the containment of Starry stonewort. The Department is in the process of awarding each lake group a rapid response grant to help pay for the response actions. In addition the Department has increased public awareness about Starry stonewort by conducting three public informational meetings, conducting a Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN) workshop, holding a Starry stonewort identification training session and has trained several Clean Boat Clean Waters (CBCW) inspectors for the City of Muskego. Finally the Department has stepped up enforcement of the AIS laws around Waukesha County and has issued several citations to individuals that were not in compliance.

I strongly encourage the Okauchee Lake Management District to take advantage of our grant programs to implement a CBCW inspection program and to find a volunteer to participate in the CLMN program. These are the best defenses a lake can have to prevent the arrival of all AIS.

Thank you for contacting the Department with your concerns and I hope I have adequately addressed them, but if not please feel free to contact me at (262) 574 – 2149.

Bob

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Visit our survey at <http://dnr.wi.gov/customersurvey> to evaluate how I did.

Bob Wakeman

Wisconsin Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

141 NW Barstow St., Rm. 180

Waukesha, WI 53188

(262) 574 – 2149

robert.wakeman@wisconsin.gov

From: Vander Wiele, Kaleb [<mailto:Kaleb.VanderWiele@legis.wisconsin.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, September 01, 2015 2:03 PM
To: Godar, Thomas TG (6064)
Subject: RE: Starry Stonewort

Hi Thomas,

I was able to have a discussion with the DNR regarding your complaint about the department's handling of Starry Stonewort. As you know, the Department would not allow use of chemicals for the control of Starry stonewort. In their opinion, Michigan and Indiana have tried extensively to control Starry Stonewort using hydrothol and Cutrine and it has not been effective. "These chemicals burn off the tops of the plant, inhibit delineating its extent, and make it difficult for their complete removal from the lakebed."

The following is the strategy that the DNR laid out to me.

"DNR developed a strategy with local partners that involves the physical removal of the plant by multiple methods: hand pulling; diver assisted suction harvesting; and dredging (if necessary) to completely remove them rather than suppressing its symptoms. DNR agrees that boat landing monitors (often assisted by Clean Boats Clean Waters) is essential to help prevent the spread of starry stonewort. That is why is an essential component of our overall strategy to help contain its spread, something that is being conveyed to lake residents and lake user groups via informational meetings. DNR would be derelict in its duty if it did not develop or communicate its regional strategy with Wisconsin citizens."

I understand that this strategy was what prompted you to send your email and I was able to communicate your disagreement about the DNR's plan of action. This is a continuing concern and we are going to continue to communicate with the DNR as the situation progresses. Please feel free to send me any addition comments or concerns in regards to this issue.

Regards,

Kaleb Vander Wiele
Policy Advisor
Office of Senator Chris Kapenga
33rd Senate District
608.266.9174
Kaleb.VanderWiele@legis.wisconsin.gov