

Starry Stonewort Update – 6-10-2020

The Okauchee Lake Management District has continued to work hard at controlling the outbreak of Starry Stonewort which was discovered in the lake late last summer. You can see updates on our efforts at the Okauchee Lake Management District website: www.olmd.org.

The website contains detailed reports on Starry Stonewort, its impact on lakes, and how it spreads.

It was with that in mind that last fall we encouraged the DNR to allow us to take aggressive and immediate action to control Starry Stonewort, especially because the largest patch, perhaps 4,000 square feet, is located near the marina and launch area of the Golden Mast and the channel. After that effort was denied, we continued meeting with the DNR, and have agreed to use a method of contained chemical application supplemented at the end with diver assisted hand pulling of remaining plant life. However, as was described at the last OLMD meeting held on June 8, 2020, the DNR has insisted that we wait until the Starry Stonewort growth is approximately two feet from the surface before beginning chemical application. The OLMD vehemently disagreed with this approach. Based on advice from marine biologists and those in aquatic invasive species control, we wish to begin treatment now and have made arrangements for all contractors to be available. At this point, the plant is in a growth stage, and it is approximately two feet from the lake bottom. Our aquatic invasive species control consultants believe **now is the most effective time to treat the Starry Stonewort**, while the chemicals can penetrate through the full plant and before the plant gets high enough that it would be potentially wrapped/chopped in passing propellers and spread, either throughout the lake, or brought up onto the boat and left to be transported to other lakes. The DNR has not relented on its plan to force us to wait until the growth is just two feet from the water surface. The OLMD Commissioners will continue to reach out to the DNR and to our elected officials to see if relief from this decision is possible.

Some have asked what they can do! This is great! You can try to contact your legislator. Okauchee Lake is divided into two Senate and two Assembly districts, and the Senators are Scott Fitzgerald and Chris Kapenga, and Representatives are Cindi Duchow and Barbara Dittrich.

The message we wish to share is that Starry Stonewort is a threat not only to Okauchee Lake, its 1000 homeowners and wonderful hospitality businesses, but also to its downstream neighbors, Oconomowoc Lake, Fowler Lake, and Lac La Belle, and should be treated now! We cannot afford to wait until the plant has grown to a place where it is much more likely to be chopped up and spread by incoming and outgoing boats near the launch site of the Golden Mast. We believe the cost of traditional chemical application is reasonable and it will have negligible, if any, impact upon the native aquatic plant population of Okauchee Lake. While no technique has proven to be wholly effective, this chemical treatment technique is supported by marine biologists, past studies in Indiana, and companies involved in plant management throughout the state, including our OLMD consultants who are exceptionally knowledgeable about our stewardship of this lake. We seek DNR authorization to immediately begin chemical treatment according to the plan that has been identified.

You can contact any of your elected representatives as follows:

Chris Kapenga - Sen.Kapenga@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9174; (800) 863-8883

Scott Fitzgerald - Sen.Fitzgerald@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5660

Cindi Duchow - Rep.Duchow@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3007; (888) 534-0099

Barbara Dittrich - Rep.Dittrich@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8551; (888) 534-0038

You can also contact DNR Staff regarding this matter as follows:

- Heidi Bunk - Southeastern Lakes Region
Wisconsin DNR
262-574-2130
E: Heidi.Bunk@wisconsin.gov
- Madison Johansen - Aquatic Plant Management, Water Quality Bureau
Wisconsin DNR
E: Madison.johansen@wisconsin.gov

Thank you for your ongoing support to safely maintain the beauty and health of Okauchee Lake and the entire Oconomowoc River basin!