

For Immediate Release
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Milfoil harvesting in Minneapolis lakes underway

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has begun harvesting milfoil in four lakes as part of its annual program to control the aquatic plant. Harvesting at lakes Calhoun, Cedar, Harriet and Wirth will take place through August.

While milfoil is an invasive species, it's not all bad, according to Tim Brown, environmental operations manager for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). "On one hand it's an invasive exotic species that crowds out native species and there's no proven method for eradicating it. On the other hand, it's become part of the ecology of the lakes it has entered and provides a habitat for fish and other animals. Overly aggressive control of milfoil can damage that habitat."

So the trick is to maintain that delicate ecological balance, which is where aquatic plant control comes into the picture. Regulated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), aquatic plant control is allowed to provide land-to-water access, enhance recreational use, control invasive aquatic plants, manage water levels, and protect or improve habitat.

Control of milfoil in Minneapolis lakes is primarily in the form of "harvesting," which provides space for the operation of keeled boats, swimming and fishing without significant obstruction. It's of limited value for canoes, which ride high on the water and have much more latitude to avoid the milfoil beds.

Harvesting involves running a machine that cuts milfoil down to about four feet below the water surface. The cut ends are loaded on to the harvester with a conveyor, and then removed from the lake and hauled to the Fort Snelling composting site. While harvesting provides for important recreational access, it doesn't eradicate or lessen the infestation. The plant can sprout from a small piece of a grown plant, and cutting the milfoil leaves many small pieces in the lake.

Due to machinery issues and low water levels, milfoil harvesting did not take place in Lake of the Isles or Lake Nokomis in 2009. "Lake of the Isles is primarily used by canoeists and we found that canoe access throughout the season was very good with few if any reported problems," Brown said. "We also measured some of the best water quality we have seen on the Isles since monitoring began."

In addition, no harvesting was done at Lake Nokomis as there were no problems with aquatic plants. Even in past years, the harvester cut approximately the equivalent of a pick-up load per day, a very small amount.

The aquatic plant control program will use a single milfoil harvester operating 10 hours per day, five days per week on lakes Calhoun, Cedar, Harriet and Wirth. The MnDNR issues permits and provides grants to supplement about 15 percent of the cost of MPRB's work.

For more information about water quality in Minneapolis lakes, visit www.minneapolisparcs.org – Caring for Our Parks – [Water Resources](#).

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