

One of the priority issues for the APLG in 2020 is Eurasian Watermilfoil.

What is Watermilfoil?

Watermilfoil is an invasive aquatic plant that grows at a depth of 1 to 10 metres and, once established, reproduces exponentially. It has no natural “predators” in Canada, and each end cut by a boat propeller or oar can take root and form a new plant.

What is at stake with this plant?

It grows easily in our waterways and forms dense beds that choke off fish breeding grounds. It changes the organic composition of lakes and causes them to age prematurely.

In the space of a few years, watermilfoil forms such dense beds that maritime activities such as swimming, canoeing, kayaking, pedal boats and fishing are no longer possible. Consequently, the presence of the plant in front of a cottage affects its market value.

Should the waters of Gagnon and Simon lakes as well as the Petite Nation River become infested with watermilfoil, there would be a decrease in tourism and a drop in the market value of shoreline properties. This will have economic consequences for all Duhamel residents.

Where is it?

As far as we know, there is none in the Duhamel lakes. The 2017 inventory of aquatic plants in Lac Gagnon did not identify any. However, there is some in many lakes around Duhamel. To the north, it is present in about 40 lakes in the Laurentians, to the west, it is present in some lakes in Papineau-Labelle park, to the east and south, it is present in Lac des Plages, Lac Hotte and the Ottawa River. The Outaouais and Laurentians are the two regions most affected by watermilfoil in Quebec.

How can we prevent it from taking root in Lac Gagnon?

Watermilfoil is transported from one body of water to another by a boat, trailer or other nautical equipment that may have a small piece of the plant attached to it.

The only way to prevent its spread is to wash all boats, trailers and all nautical equipment before launching them.

Taking 15 minutes to wash your boat, trailer and other equipment is nothing compared to the harmful consequences of watermilfoil in our lakes.

What is your Association doing?

On October 29th, we made a presentation to the municipal council on watermilfoil and asked them to make the fight against this invasive plant a municipal priority. In this presentation, we proposed various possible actions concerning awareness, signage, control at the landings, boat washing and an action plan should this plant becomes established in Duhamel's waterways.

On November 10th, we participated in a conference organized by the Watermilfoil Control Committee of the *Association pour la protection et*

l'environnement du Lac-Des-Plages. For the past three years, the fight against watermilfoil in that lake has mobilized 200 volunteers for ten weekends during the months of May, June and July! The lessons learned for those of us who are not yet affected are: 1) raise awareness among lake users; 2) implement mandatory washing of boats, trailers and other watercraft before they are launched; and 3) act as quickly as possible to eradicate the plant as soon as its presence is noticed.

Then, at the end of November and in December we had three meetings with the municipality to discuss their action plan, the installation of a sign on watermilfoil and the washing of boats, trailers and other nautical equipment, and the feasibility of installing a self-service wash station at the Lac Gagnon landing. We hope that the municipality will follow up on these discussions.

“Lac Gagnon Sentinels”

This year we want to set up groups of property owners in each section of Lac Gagnon who would be trained to detect the presence of watermilfoil. While enjoying their usual water activities (swimming, canoeing, kayaking, etc.), the Sentinels would be asked to observe the aquatic plants and, if they think they have identified watermilfoil, to notify a contact person who would come and make a more detailed assessment.

We are planning to organize a training session for the Sentinels that would last a few hours. They would learn how to identify watermilfoil and how to make an underwater viewer to better see the plants. More information to follow.