



ASSOCIATION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES
DU LAC GAGNON

LE REMOUS - JULY 2020

Special Issue - Eurasian Watermilfoil

Working together to protect our lake from this devastating plant

The summer season is upon us and we decided to devote an edition of Le Remous to this threatening aquatic plant that is on our doorstep and to our strategy to prevent it from taking root in our wonderful lake.

This strategy requires the involvement of all the owners but also the close collaboration of the Municipality and the Organisme des bassins versants Rouge, Petite-Nation, Saumon (OBVRPNS). This priority issue has been delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but everything has been put in place for the first phase that can have a true impact on the quality of our lake.

What is Eurasian watermilfoil?

Eurasian watermilfoil is an invasive water plant that grows at a depth of 1 to 10 metres and, once established, it reproduces exponentially. It has no natural “predators” in Canada, and each section cut by a boat propeller or oar can take root and form a new plant. Watermilfoil is carried between bodies of water by a boat, trailer, or other water equipment that has even the smallest piece of the plant attached to it.



Figure 1: www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/profiles-profil/eurasianwatermilfoil-myrriophylleenepi-fra.html

The market value of our cottages can be affected

Eurasian watermilfoil easily establishes itself in our watercourses and forms thick mats that choke off fish breeding grounds. This plant changes the organic composition of lakes and causes them to age prematurely. Within a few years, watermilfoil forms such thick mats that they interfere with activities like swimming, boating and fishing. Consequently, the presence of the plant in the vicinity of a cottage affects its market value. If the lakes of Duhamel and the Petite Nation River were ever infested with watermilfoil, there would be a decrease in tourism and a drop in the market value of waterfront properties. This will have economic consequences for all Duhamel residents.



Figure 2: www.obvcapitale.org/plans-directeurs-de-leau-2/attachment/myriophylle-a-epi-au-lac-delage-3

Eurasian watermilfoil in lakes around Duhamel

The 2017 inventory of Lac Gagnon aquatic plants did not detect the presence of any Eurasian watermilfoil. However, this plant is found in many lakes around Duhamel. To the north, it is found in about 40 lakes in the Laurentians, to the west, it is in some lakes in Papineau-Labelle park, to the east and south, there is some in Lac des Plages, Lac Hotte and the Ottawa River. The Outaouais and Laurentians are the two Quebec regions most affected by watermilfoil.

Experience of a neighbouring lake

Judging by what happened at Lac des Plages, which is small compared to Lac Gagnon, if any watermilfoil were discovered here, we would have to act as very quickly, otherwise it would be almost impossible to destroy it. There are currently only two effective methods to eradicate it: installing large bottom blankets or mats or having divers manually remove it. At Lac des Plages, which uses both methods, they have spent tens of thousands of dollars and mobilized a hundred volunteers for ten of the twelve weekends from May to July each year!



Figure 3: ©Association de la protection et l'environnement du Lac des Plages



Figure 4: ©Association de la protection et l'environnement du Lac des Plages

Prevention is essential

The only way to prevent it from spreading is to wash all boats, trailers and water equipment before they are launched. If you are coming from another lake, taking 15 minutes to wash your boat, trailer and nautical equipment is nothing compared to the harmful consequences of watermilfoil in our lakes and the efforts that would be needed to eradicate it.



Figure 3: www.sepaq.com/parcs-quebec/blogue/article.dot?id=4ce8c3d7-a9b5-4e2a-b143-eea0b96d8e0d

What is the APLG doing?

At the 2019 AGM, we presented background information on the Eurasian watermilfoil and undertook to make this issue a priority in 2020.

In October, we gave a presentation to the municipal council on measures to be taken to prevent this plant from taking root in Duhamel. We asked that watermilfoil prevention be a municipal priority and provided suggestions on inspecting and washing boats and nautical equipment, controlling access to water bodies and raising awareness with all users of Duhamel's waterways.

In January 2020, we continued discussions with the Municipality and the OBVRPNS.

We are pleased to note that the Municipality will take the following measures based on our suggestions:

1. Signage

We asked the Municipality to post signs at strategic points in the Municipality, like other municipalities have done, to inform users of Duhamel lakes that they have to wash their boats and nautical equipment if they are coming from another lake. We also asked that information signs on watermilfoil be posted at all boat launch sites. The Municipality has undertaken to do so.



Figure 4: Municipality of Nominique sign

2. Developing expertise

Inspired by our idea to create a group of sentinels to detect the presence of watermilfoil in Lac Gagnon, the Municipality awarded a contract to the OBV to extend the control initiatives to the entire Municipality. There are three components to this contract:

- Raise awareness among all Duhamel residents about Eurasian watermilfoil, its impacts and how to prevent it.
- Train sentinels for all Duhamel lakes in collaboration with lake associations.
- Develop a rapid response plan in the event that watermilfoil is detected in a lake in Duhamel.

To carry out this contract, the OBV will be supported by the Conseil régional de l'environnement des Laurentides (CRE Laurentides), Quebec's experts in the fight against watermilfoil. The Municipality's involvement and its willingness to extend the battle to the entire Municipality is excellent news and shows how seriously our elected officials take the preservation of our natural environment.

Become a Lac Gagnon sentinel

Lac Gagnon sentinels would detect the presence of Eurasian watermilfoil and alert a designated contact person who will be able to have the plant definitely identified and, if necessary, implement the Municipality's rapid response plan.

Sentinels would be property owners from various locations around the lake who would receive training on how to search for the plants using an aquascope that will be provided to them. The idea is for people to simply take a few minutes to look at water plants when they are out in the water, because the sooner we can detect, contain and limit the spread of this invasive plant, the easier it will be to eradicate it from our lake.

To become a sentinel you have to:

1. Agree to attend a video-conference training session on identifying Eurasian watermilfoil. The first training will take place on Thursday, July 16 at 9:00 am. Other training sessions may be added depending on demand. Even if you are not available on the 16th, you can still sign up and we will see how we can accommodate you.
2. Agree to check aquatic plants in the assigned area at least once during the summer, follow the procedures to identify the specific location and contact officials if you believe you have detected Eurasian watermilfoil.
3. Sign up by emailing info@aplq.ca with the following information:
 - a. Name
 - b. Lake address
 - c. Telephone number
 - d. Email address
 - e. Whether you are available for the July 16 video-conference training at 9:00 a.m.

Other APLG requests of the Municipality

While the above measures will help prevent the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil, there are other steps that need to be taken.

1. Lake access by-laws

In February, the Municipality tabled a project to replace bylaws 2015-03 and 2016-04 regarding lake access. The APLG provided comments with a view to making controls more effective to prevent the introduction of Eurasian watermilfoil in Duhamel. At its June 5th meeting, the Municipality adopted the new bylaw. Although not all of our suggestions were retained, we will continue to work with the Municipality to improve controls against watermilfoil.

2. Washing stations

Since the best way to prevent the introduction of watermilfoil is to wash boats, trailers and watercraft, the APLG continues to advocate for convenient and free washing. In this regard, we have asked the Municipality to consider the installation of free self-service wash stations that comply with environmental standards at strategic locations such as the main launch on Chemin de la Grande baie.

3. Controlling access to Lac Gagnon

In our representations to the Municipal council, we provided suggestions to improve the current gate control system at the main launch. We believe that the current system with a number code that is changed once a week and often communicated by telephone is a weak link. We hope to work with the Municipality to put in place a more rigorous but convenient system for all Duhamel residents.

Concerning the launch at the north end of the lake, we have repeatedly asked the Municipality to either close it or install a locked gate like the one at the main launch.

Do your share

Here's how we can all prevent watermilfoil from invading our lake:

- If you are bringing a boat, trailer and nautical equipment that has been in another lake, wash it thoroughly before launching it in Lac Gagnon.
- Become a Lac Gagnon sentinel. Information on how to become a sentinel will be communicated soon.
- Talk to your neighbours, contribute to awareness efforts and help us ensure that boats and equipment are washed.
- Learn about invasive aquatic plants and, over time, note the changes near your cottage. The following site presents considerable information:
<http://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/eau/paee/index.htm>
- Don't provide a habitat that is conducive to Eurasian watermilfoil. Revegetate your property's shoreline because, in addition to controlling erosion, you are restoring the role of shoreline vegetation as a filter for fertilizers, pesticides and sediment in runoff; creating a sunscreen to limit warming of the water; and providing habitat, food, and shelter for wildlife. The following site will help: <https://quebecvert.com/nos-publications/vegetalisation-des-bandes-riveraines>
- Keep up to date on the Municipality's projects and policy regarding watermilfoil and do not hesitate to ask for information from elected municipal officials and members of the APLG Board of Directors.

Conclusion

We hope that this special issue of the Remous on the Eurasian watermilfoil has provide you with some insight into the different aspects of this priority project.

Given this invasive species' proximity to Duhamel lakes, we have to increase our prevention efforts to keep this plant from establishing itself in our area. These efforts are nothing though compared to the work and funds that would be required if Lac Gagnon were to become infested.

If you have any comments or suggestions to guide us in our approach, please do not hesitate to let us know at info@aplg.ca.

Some web references

1. Checklist for boat inspection and cleaning (bilingual):
http://www.obvt.ca/fichiers/160421%20KG%20aide%20memoire_inspection-lavage.pdf

2. Detecting European watermilfoil: <http://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/eau/paee/index.htm>
<http://www.invadingspecies.com/eurasian-water-milfoil/>
3. Guide to avoid an invasion:
https://crelaurentides.org/images/images_site/documents/guides/guide_myriophylle_AN.pdf
4. CRE Laurentides – aquatic exotic invasive plants: <https://crelaurentides.org/dossiers/eau-lacs/paee>