

Whitefish Pilot

111th year / issue 13

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

\$1.00

Progress in eradicating invasive from Beaver Lake

By HEIDI DESCH
Whitefish Pilot

Positive results from efforts to remove Eurasian watermilfoil from Beaver Lake west of Whitefish indicate that the aquatic invasive species may be completely eradicated from the lake within the next few years.

"We still have to be vigilant a couple more years," Mike Koopel, executive director of the Whitefish Lake Institute said. "It's unprecedented, once we had

Eurasian watermilfoil I wouldn't have thought we'd be able to get rid of it." Eurasian watermilfoil was discovered in Beaver Lake in the fall of 2011.

See Beaver Lake, A8

Beaver Lake

ivan A1

The plants, covering about a 12 by 12 foot area in the lake, were found by Department of Natural Resources and Conservation personnel. Since then, efforts to manage the growth and remove the plants have been ongoing.

Watermilfoil is a threat because it roots itself to the bottom of water

bodies and forms dense mats at the water surface shading out native plants, clogging motors and making swimming nearly impossible.

The plant can spread rapidly because it reproduces through stem fragmentation. Pieces the size of postage stamps that have broken off the main stem can reproduce. It's most often spread overland by boats that have not been cleaned properly.

Efforts in 2012 removed

20 pounds of the plant. In 2013 there was five pounds taken out and in 2014 less than one pound was removed. Less than one pound of the plant was also removed in 2015, according to WLI.

Spotlight surveys and diver dredging took place at the end of July 2015, according to Koopel. The entire lakeshore was surveyed and a handful of plants were observed and removed along the shoreline west of the boat ramp.

An increased effort to survey shallow water areas less than one foot deep found a handful of plants east of the boat ramp.

"No reproach was seen at the area next to the boat ramp or in the two patches west of the boat ramp," Koopel said. "It is likely that eradication can be achieved within a couple of years."

Post-system dredging efforts to control the plant have been effective, Koopel noted.

In 2016, WLI plans to again use suction dredging, which involves a diver identification survey of single plants or communities and then suction dredging and valued plants from the roots to prevent fragmentation. WLI also deploys a sediment curtain near the lake outlet to Beaver Creek to catch any fragments of the plant that may break off during control efforts.

Divers are permitted to check their watercraft

and trailers for suspect material every time they take their boat out of the water. They are also encouraged to wash and dry their boats after each use.

Work at Beaver Lake is part of a multi-agency AIS management program that the city of Whitefish contracts with WLI each year to implement. WLI contracts with Hansen Environmental for the monitoring and control work at Beaver Lake.