

Portage Lake Report



Volume 1, Issue 1

October 2009

Concerned Neighbors Form Committee

Welcome to the first *Friends of Portage Lake* newsletter. Following a survey of Portage Lake residents, a committee has formed to study weed issues facing our lake and to research future action.

Our committee has met twice so far. At our first meeting on August 15th, we met each other, reviewed the lake residents survey results, and discussed mutual concerns with the level of weeds in the lake. It was decided to contact two reputable lake management firms and talk to them about treatment options. We also decided to talk with the Michigan Lakes & Streams Association (ML&SA) to learn more about lake management. We made it our goal to become educated on the issues and associated options, and then to pass that information on to our neighbors.

At our most recent meeting, September 14th, we reviewed the results of two initial assessments of the lake (see summary on page 2) and heard a presentation by Scott Brown of the ML&SA. We also agreed to prepare a newsletter and share what we learn with our neighbors.

Our goals at this point are:

1. to continue to educate ourselves using resources from ML&SA and the State of Michigan.
2. to get the necessary training and begin monitoring conditions in our lake.
3. to develop a treatment strategy for any invasive species, while protecting native ones.
4. to look at ways to reduce nutrient inflow to the lake.
5. to develop funding options for these activities.

As we consider options for a treatment and maintenance program for our lake, we will keep you informed and schedule group meetings to discuss the various options and their associated costs.

Thank you for your interest in maintaining the quality of our beautiful lake!

Mark Parks
Chairman

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Initial Weed Survey Reports: Cause for Hope and Concern

Professional Lake Management of Caledonia and Aquatic Enhancement & Survey of Angola were contacted and both offered to do a free initial assessment.

Their initial surveys contained very similar results. They noted that we have a wide

variety of native plant species that are good for our lake and should not be removed by a lake treatment program. We also have a small amount of invasive Eurasian Milfoil and a new culprit on the scene called Cabomba.

Eurasian Milfoil can be controlled

“The good news is that... Eurasian Milfoil has not overtaken the lake and should be easily controlled if we act soon.”

with a limited amount of treatment, but Cabomba has no approved treatments to date that have been successful. A large amount of Cabomba was found in Snug Harbor,

as well as areas at the north end of the lake near the river. The Cabomba could

present some significant challenges to control.

The good news is that, unlike many lakes in SW Michigan, the Eurasian Milfoil has not overtaken the lake and should be easily controlled if we act soon. The Cabomba, on the other hand, may require a lim-

ited experimental treatment to see if it responds. If not, we may need to wait for new treatment options to be approved by the DEQ.

It was also noted that we likely have a high level of nutrients in our lake which, along with improved water clarity brought by the zebra mussels, contribute to an abundant weed growth as a whole. Monitoring the nutrient levels is necessary to determine their role and develop an overall plan of action.

ML&SA Offers Assistance

Scott Brown from the Michigan Lakes & Streams Association presented information to the committee at our Sept. 14 meeting. Extremely informative topics included riparian rights, monitoring lake conditions, and controlling invasive weed species.

Scott stressed the importance of maintaining the quality of a lake's waters. Weed-infested lakes lead to as much as a 40% drop in property values. Unpleasant odors, reduced recreational activities, and even

3-eyed grandchildren have been reported (ask Terry!).

Scott also stressed the importance of acting against invasive plants before it's too late. While native plants protect against erosion, provide fish habitat, and reduce sediments and algae growth, invasive species upset nature's balance and result in irreparable harm.

ML&SA's annual conference is April 30-May 1, 2010. For more information go to:

www.mlswa.org



Eurasian
Water-milfoil

Eurasian water-milfoil is an underwater aquatic plant native to Europe, Asia, and northern Africa. Eurasian milfoil first arrived here in the 1960s, and is found in places with lots of nutrients. It likes heavily used lakes, disturbed lake beds, and lakes that get a lot of nitrogen and phosphorous runoff.

Eurasian water-milfoil uses seeds to reproduce, but it also reproduces by fragments of the plant which are carried downstream by water currents and spread easily. Milfoil is also spread by boats, motors, trailers, bilges, live wells, or bait buckets. Eurasian milfoil can be controlled with herbicides and, in some lakes, the biological control of Eurasian milfoil is being attempted.

Cabomba Invades Lake: Aquatic Enhancement & Survey's Report

Thank you for the opportunity to perform a basic evaluation of Portage Lake. I spent some time on the lake on August 19th to get a feel for the nature of the aquatic plant community. Water clarity was relatively good with a Secchi measurement of 6.4 feet recorded.

Portage Lake appears to have a very diverse flora. Thirteen species of native plants were noted along with two species of non-native potentially invasive plants. The non-native invasive plant Eurasian watermilfoil was present, but growth was scattered and most plants did not appear to be healthy. It does not appear to present a major problem or imminent threat to the lake at this time.

However, cabomba (*Cabomba caroliniana*), a potentially invasive plant native to the southeastern United States, has found it's

way into Portage Lake and has formed extensive areas of growth, especially near the mouths of the tributary streams at the lake's north end. The cove just north of



Cabomba Caroliniana specimen from Portage Lake

the Public Access site also contains extensive cabomba growth.

This plant has been noted in several lakes in southwest lower Michigan in recent years and is also now showing up in Oakland County in southeast Michigan. It probably owes its presence to the aquarium trade where it is often sold for use in home aquariums and water-gardens. At some point in the past an individual may have dumped an aquarium into an area lake or stream and begun the spread of this plant into the wild. Further spread has probably occurred as plant fragments are transported on boat trailers or through flowing waters to other lakes.

Unfortunately there are no aquatic pesticides currently labeled for use in Michigan that are highly effective on this plant so control options are limited. New products that may achieve labeling in the next couple years have shown promise so an effective control may soon be available.

One additional invasive plant, curly leaf pondweed, is probably also present on the lake, but was not seen as it is generally most prominent in the spring and naturally completes its life cycle and drops out of the water column by the end of July. I can take a look at the lake next spring to see if it is present in significant enough quantities to cause a problem.

Please feel free to give me a call if you should have any questions.

Scott Banfield

Aquatic Enhancement & Survey, Inc.

Cabomba caroliniana (Fanwort)

Fanwort is a submersed, sometimes floating, but often rooted, freshwater perennial plant with short, fragile rhizomes. The shoots are grass green to olive green or sometimes reddish brown. The leaves are of two types: submersed and floating. The submersed leaves are finely divided and arranged in pairs on the stem. The floating leaves, when present, are linear and inconspicuous, with an alternate arrangement. They are less than 1/2 inch long and narrow (less than 1/4 inch). The leaf blade attaches to the center, where there is a slight constriction. The flowers are white and small and they float on the water surface.



Fanwort spreads primarily by stem fragments or rhizomes. The rhizomes are fragile and easily broken, facilitating vegetative spread and transport to new water bodies. Fanwort is extremely persistent and competitive. Under suitable environmental conditions, it can form dense stands, crowding out previously well-established plants. Once established, this plant can clog drainage canals and freshwater streams, interfering with recreational, agricultural, and aesthetic uses.

Become a “Friend of Portage Lake”

While *Friends of Portage Lake* is just in its infancy, it is already clear that protecting our lake will require on-going study and the involvement of many. We invite you to join our efforts. Here are some ways you can help:

1. **Become informed:** We plan to publish this newsletter quarterly. (*Save paper by giving us your email address!*) In addition, many on-line resources exist. We will highlight several each issue. One good resource is: www.waterontheweb.org

2. **Contribute:** A \$10 donation will help with the costs of organizing, mailing, printing, sampling, training, etc.

3. **Get Trained:** In order to have a full monitoring program in place next year, we must register soon for training. Check below if interested. For more info, visit MiCorps website at: www.micorps.net

4. **Volunteer:** We are exploring possible fundraising and team building opportunities. Many hands

are needed. Let us know if you can help.

5. **Think Green:** We'll be publishing tips each issue to help protect the lake. (*Tip#1: Use phosphorous-free fertilizers*)

If you have questions or comments, please contact any committee member. To volunteer or contribute, please clip and mail the form below to:

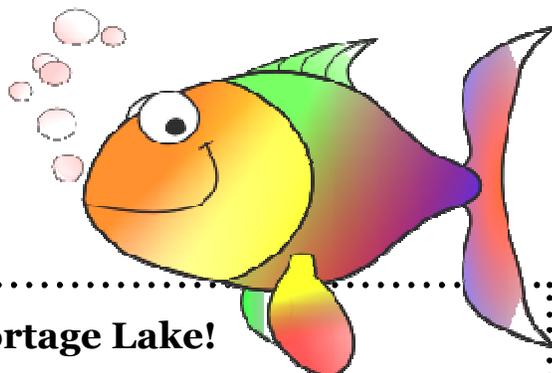
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Our Mission

To learn, study and monitor the condition of Portage Lake and take steps to keep it healthy and viable.



I'm a Friend of Portage Lake!

Check all that apply, clip & mail to the above address:

- Contribution enclosed: \$_____ (Thanks!)
- Interested in lake monitoring training.
- Volunteer to help with fund raising and other activities.
- Other:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____@_____