

---

# THE CULLEN CURRENTS

---

*Spring, 2020*



## **2020 Curly leaf pondweed treatment**

On April 29 and 30 Clarke Aquatic Services staff surveyed the three Cullen Lakes for curly leaf pondweed growth. Both days were sunny and the wind was moderate (3-9 mph). Surface water temperature fluctuated between 48 and 50 degrees on Lower and Middle Cullen and between 50 and 53 degrees on Upper Cullen.



Each lake's survey looked very similar to the 2019 summer survey as far as acreage, and most of the CLP found was dense in the proposed treatment areas, although it was still early in its life cycle. Water clarity in Middle Cullen was lower than other years with algae covering much of any type of vegetation.

On May 5 and 6 Central Minnesota Aquatics (CMA) conducted surveys to verify Clarke's finding and proposed treatment areas, as required by the conditions of the DNR grants (see article at right). CMA found Clarke's surveys to be accurate.

All the appropriate paperwork was forwarded to Tim Plude, DNR Aquatic Invasive Species specialist, to complete the treatment permit application process. Plude issued the permits on May 8 and Clarke said it will conduct the treatments as soon as possible.

The permits allow treatment of up to 22.05 acres in Lower Cullen, 15.78 acres in Middle Cullen, and 10.81 acres in Upper Cullen. Areas to be treated in Lower Cullen are off the the NW and NNE shorelines and along the perimeter of the rushes in the E and W ends of the lake.

Areas in Middle Cullen to be treated are in the bay to the NE of the resort, off the shoreline directly to the S of that, along the perimeter of the heavy vegetation off the E shoreline, and along the W shoreline from the inlet stream from Upper Cullen to the point.

Areas in Upper Cullen to be treated are along the NE and E shoreline, off the central NE shoreline, and out from the central S shoreline.

Maps showing the treated areas will be included in the summer newsletter.

If you find CLP off your shoreline and the water is shallow enough, you can remove it by gently pulling it from as close to the lake bottom as possible and disposing of it away from the lake.

## **CLA receives DNR grants for CLP treatment**

Thanks to the diligent and timely grant application work of Carol Lindahl, AIS Committee co-chair, all three Cullen Lakes have been awarded a grant to treat curly leaf pondweed this spring. This is after three years of no grant money from the DNR being available. Upper Cullen was awarded up to \$1,416, Middle Cullen will receive up to \$1,242, and Lower Cullen was awarded up to \$1,195.

A condition of the grants is that CLA must arrange for an aquatic plant surveyor who is not the treatment contractor to do a delineation survey of the areas of CLP to be treated in each lake. CLA is currently under contract with Clarke Aquatic Services to do a pre-treatment survey, chemical treatment of CLP, and a post treatment survey. To meet the DNR grant requirement cited above, CLA signed a one time contract with Central Minnesota Aquatics to survey and verify the treatment polygons proposed by Clarke. The cost of this additional survey verification process will reduce each lake's treatment grant by \$500. However, CLA is still appreciative of the remaining grant funds that will be used for the CLP treatment itself.

## Highlights from the 2020 Cullen Lakes property owners survey

In mid February 265 surveys were mailed to property owners on the three Cullen Lakes. Of these, 151 surveys (57%) were completed and returned close enough to the April 1 deadline to be counted. Ten surveys were returned too long after the deadline to be counted. All but three of the returned surveys were from CLA members. Not everyone answered every question, but to simplify calculating the following percentages they are based on all 151 surveys returned. For the same reason, the percentages will not always equal 100%.

### Section 1: Lake property and its use

\*All properties but one are used in the summer, 79% are used in the spring, 86% are used in the fall, and 48% are used in the winter.

\*72% of the properties have a winterized dwelling and only five properties have no dwelling.

\*43 properties have been in the same family's ownership for more than 50 years (1 for more than 100), 25 for 31-50 years, 19 for 21-30 years, 26 for 11-20 years, 27 for 5-10 years, and 13 for fewer than 5 years.

\*11% of respondents reported they have their septic tank checked and cleaned/pumped by a licensed pumper every year, 54% every 2-3 years, and 23% every 4-5 years. Unfortunately, two people said they never have their septic tank checked and cleaned/pumped by a licensed pumper.

\*The household appliances owned and used that affect a septic system are: washing machine (73%), dishwasher (58%), water softener (41%), garbage disposal (11%), and hot tub/Jacuzzi (4%).

\*Of the 141 respondents who reported a well on their property 69% have a deep well and 25% have a shallow (sand point) well. Six respondents said they have no well on their property.

\*80% of respondents said their property has a buffer of natural, unmanaged vegetation along the shoreline. Of these, 50% are over five feet deep and 81% of the buffers of all depths extend along at least 3/4 of the property's shoreline.

\*30% of respondents said they clear aquatic vegetation along their shoreline. Of these, 96% do so by hand. Nine people reported using a weed roller and only two do so with chemicals.

\*Only 15% of respondents said they have experienced swimmer's itch in the past two summers.

### Section 2: General impressions of the Cullen Lakes

\*The lake related issues perceived as a slight problem or worse by 50% or more of the respondents are: lake water pollution due to runoff/erosion, land use ordinances not being followed/enforced, aquatic vegetation growth, curly leaf pondweed growth, purple loosestrife shoreline infestation, access between the lakes, lake users being inconsiderate, and inconsiderate use of personal watercraft (PWC).

\*Lake related issues perceived as a moderate problem or worse by 50% or more of the respondents are aquatic vegetation growth and curly leaf pondweed growth.

\*Only five people thought the overall quality of any of the three lakes had gotten better over the last five years. Three times as many people thought Upper Cullen's quality was about the same versus those who thought it had gotten worse, four times as many people thought Middle Cullen's quality was about the same versus those who thought it had gotten worse, and twice as many people thought Lower Cullen's quality was about the same versus those who thought it had gotten worse.

\*The most commonly mentioned things by those who felt the lakes' quality was getting worse were more weed growth, zebra mussels in Lower Cullen, and more and faster boat traffic on the lakes.

### Section 3: Use of the Cullen lakes

\*Non-motorized watercraft used on the lakes are: kayaks (51% of respondents), stand up paddle boards (47%), canoes (42%), and paddle boats (30%), row boats (15%), sailboats (.7%), and only one windsurfer.

\*Watercraft of 40 HP or less reported by respondents were fishing boats (40%) and pontoons (27%).

\*Watercraft of more than 40 HP were recreational boats (30%), pontoons (26%), fishing boats (25%), personal watercraft (17%), and two wake boats.

\*The three most popular recreational uses of the lakes are difficult to know for sure, as many people simply checked activities instead of ranking them 1, 2, or 3. Based on respondents who ranked the activities, the three most popular are fishing, swimming, and pontoon cruising.

\*Swimming/wading/playing in the water was the most frequently mentioned activity at the lake (78% of respondents), followed by pleasure boating in a motorized craft (72%), hiking/walking (69%), and fishing from a watercraft (66%).

\*Opinions about the quality of fishing on all three lakes were split fairly evenly between "stayed about the same" and "not as good".

\*55% of respondents said they are aware of the current northern pike regulations.

- \*54% of respondents said they have not seen a change in the amount of bow fishing on the lakes in the past five years.
- \*56% of respondents said catch and release fishing is very important, 28% said it is important, 11% said it is somewhat important, and one person said it is not important.

#### **Section 4: The lake association**

- \*95% of the respondents said they are a member of CLA and three people said they are not.
- \*23% of the CLA members said they regularly attend the annual meeting. The most common reasons given for not attending are not being at the lake at that time and family activity conflicts.
- \*A wide variety of suggestions were made for topics to be covered at the annual meetings and possible ways to improve the meetings. A few respondents had fun with their answers, but most of the ideas will be discussed by the Board of Directors and considered when planning future annual meetings.
- \*There was far too much variety in the comments made as to what CLA is doing or should be doing to serve its members to be consolidated or summarized here. Most comments were constructive and they will be discussed at upcoming Board of Directors meetings.
- \*32% of respondents said they have visited the CLA web site and 63% said they have not. Comments by those who have visited the site were very positive and a several good suggestions were made for improving the site.
- \*13% of respondents said they have visited the CLA Facebook page while 85% said they have not. Many of those who have not said they don't do Facebook. Those who have visited the page said they would like to see more posts and more pictures.
- \*The 97% of respondents who answered the question about the newsletter all said they read it. Many good suggestions were offered for future newsletter articles.
- \*75% of respondents prefer voluntary tax-deductible donations as the means of acquiring the necessary funds for future treatment of aquatic invasive species. The least preferred means of doing so is an increase in dues.

**Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to the survey. Your input is invaluable!**

#### **Next steps**

- \*The CLA Board of Directors will discuss the results of the survey and make recommendations to the Lake Management Planning (LMP) Committee regarding the update of the Lake Management Plan.
- \*The LMP Committee will provide the CLA Board with a draft of the 2020 Lake Management Plan update at the July 11 board meeting and discuss changes it has recommended making to the existing Plan.
- \*The Plan update will either be adopted by the Board at its July 11 meeting or suggested changes will be made to the Plan and it will be brought before the Board for its adoption at the July 25 special Board Meeting.
- \*The Board-adopted 2020 update of the Lake Management Plan will be included in the fall newsletter and posted on the CLA web site.

### **Boating during COVID-19**



When hitting the water this season, know the DNR's COVID-19 outdoor recreation guidelines and practice the following to protect yourselves and others;

- \*Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet. This includes places such as fuel stations and community docks and means no beaching or tying up to other boats.
- \*Boat only with people in your immediate household.
- \*Boat close to home. Travel to and from the access site without making other stops.
- \*When fueling, wash your hands as you would when fueling a car. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

\*When launching and loading your boat, give people ahead of you plenty of time and space to finish launching or loading before you approach.

\*Keep in mind water-access site conditions may be different than in previous years. DNR-managed accesses are open, but spring maintenance has not yet always been completed.

\*If you have been diagnosed with or are exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing), stay home. This self-isolation period should extend for at least 7 days after the illness begins and include 72 hours of being fever-free without using fever-reducing medications and resolution of other symptoms.

\*Know what's open. To see what DNR-managed sites are available, see the DNR's COVID-19 website or call the DNR information center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367.

## CLA membership update

As of May 8, 2020 we have 242 paid members and 5 complimentary members (new owners). Membership letters for 2020 were mailed in early December to allow for those wanting to use a donation for 2019 tax purposes to do so. A second dues notice was mailed in late March to those who had not yet sent in their 2020 dues. This brought in dues and donations from 38 more people. However, there are still 16 past CLA members who have not sent in their dues yet. ***If your name is highlighted on the mailing label, you haven't yet paid your dues.***

If you haven't already sent in your \$25 membership dues (and hopefully a contribution towards the treatment of curly-leaf pondweed), please take the time now to write your check, make any necessary corrections to your personal data on the membership letter you received, and mail them both to CLA, PO Box 466, Nisswa, MN 56468.

For those lake properties that are co-owned, we encourage all owners to have their own membership in CLA. This not only provides additional support for the lake association, it also guarantees all owners will receive important information concerning the lakes.

Please help us keep our membership records current by sending any changes in your mailing address, email address, or a change in ownership of your property to either Ann Beaver, newsletter editor, or to Carol Lindahl, Membership Committee chair. Their contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

## Curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) management donations update

Again, the CLA Board of Directors heartily thanks all who have contributed thus far to the 2020 CLP treatment fund. The very positive response is truly impressive.

Here are some of the statistics as of **May 8**:

\*184 property owners and family members have made a CLP donation. There are 242 paid CLA members so far this year, so that's 76%!

\*82 contributions were the \$250 suggested in the membership mailing. This does not include the co-owned properties whose owners split the donation among themselves. (We don't expect co-owners to each contribute the suggested amount.)

\*27 contributions were more than the suggested \$250.

\*Contributions have ranged from \$25 to \$975.

\*Contributions total \$37,730.

**THANK YOU!**

## 2020 CLA annual meeting

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the predictions about its danger lasting until a vaccine for it is developed, it is very likely that CLA will not hold its Annual Meeting in person this year. Lakes area health facilities currently believe the Covid-19 peak will not be until early to mid August in this part of the state.

More information on this will be shared in the summer newsletter and via email, Facebook, and the CLA website once the Board has decided how to handle the necessary business of the meeting.

For at least the next few months, the CLA Board of Directors will hold its monthly meetings via Zoom rather than in person.



## Fourth of July boat parades

Each of the three Cullen Lakes will again have a Fourth of July boat parade informally organized by its lakeshore property owners.

Coronavirus guidelines in place at the time should be adhered to so participants can safely enjoy this annual event.

Participants should gather at the east end of their lake on July 4 shortly before 2:00 p.m.

**Please plan on making one entire trip around the lake so on-shore observers can view all parade participants.**

Send photos you take of your parade to the newsletter editor to be included in the summer newsletter.

## Zebra Mussel reminder

Lower Cullen has zebra mussels. Zebra mussels have razor sharp edges. Remember to wear water shoes when playing/swimming in the lake. If you are going to be handling items that have been in the lake for a while, it is a good idea to wear sturdy gloves to protect your hands from zebra mussels that may be attached to the items.



## CHECKLIST FOR OWNING LAKESHORE PROPERTY

from the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative

As a lakeshore property owner you have a unique opportunity to serve as a good lake steward, while increasing the value of your property. A number of studies show that preserving or restoring the natural character of shorelands increases property values.

The benefits of preserving natural shoreland vegetation include: great variety of colors and textures to frame your lake view, natural screening to muffle noise and shield your property from those “busy days” on the lake, habitat for a rich variety of wildlife, protection from sloughing into the lake, and perhaps even better fishing.

By following this checklist of practices for good lake stewards you add to the enjoyment of your property, increase its value, and preserve it for future generations. A series of small positive actions on your part, added to the same actions by your neighbors and other property owners around the lake, can have a significant benefit to the lake and its water quality.

### Landscaping

\*Maintain a natural landscape -- keep or replenish trees, plants, wildflowers, native grasses and ground cover of low-growing vegetation.

\*Leave or maintain a buffer zone (30 feet or more) between lake and lawn.

\*Preserve or re-create a natural wooded setting and still maintain a view of the lake.

\*Limit paving or sidewalks and driveways to prevent runoff to the lake.

\*Plant a rain garden which will promote rainwater infiltration and help control runoff.



### Lawn Care

\*Cut back on the size of your lawn, especially towards the lake.

\*Allow natural vegetation to reestablish itself, especially between your lawn and the lake.

\*Mow only when necessary (ideal height is 2.5 - 3 inches) and leave grass clippings on the lawn.

\*Avoid using fertilizers and broadleaf herbicides.

\*If you do fertilize your lawn, remember it is illegal in Crow wing County to use a fertilizer containing phosphorus.

\*Pull weeds by hand whenever possible.

\*Rake leaves as soon as possible after they fall; do not allow leaves to blow into the lake.

### Aquatic Plant Protection

\*Preserve aquatic plants. Remove only the plants absolutely necessary for swimming or accessing open water.

\*Re-establish rooted, emergent aquatic plants.

\*Use organic materials (shrubs, brush, logs, etc.) combined with plants for erosion control.

\*Use rip rap only if organic materials are not effective in controlling erosion.

### Gardens

\*Locate your garden away from the shoreline.

\*Till or weed instead of using herbicides, and avoid using pesticides.

\*Plant a wide variety of plants and rotate them from year to year.

### Building and Remodeling

\*Construct docks, decks, and other outdoor structures from sustainable, low-toxicity materials such as untreated wood, FSC wood, or recycled plastic composite materials.

\*Maintain existing elevation of the lot so as to not significantly change the flow of water from the land.

\*When doing remodeling, install erosion barriers near the shoreline to prevent sediment runoff from entering the lake.

### General

\*Sweep driveways and sidewalks instead of washing them down.

\*Use zero phosphorus dishwasher detergents.

\*Use other cleaning agents carefully and do not put them into your septic system or allow them to wash into the lake.

\*Pick up and dispose of pet waste immediately, properly and away from the water.

\*Follow the recommended maintenance schedule for your septic system and operate it properly.

\*Keep garden/grass clippings and leaves out of the lake.

\*Wash your vehicles on the grass rather than on the driveway.

\*Compost yard and vegetable waste.

## *Currents on the Cullens*

### **New owners**

Brian & Beth Rahn, Lower Cullen (L87)

Brandon Voigt & Xialoi Liu, Middle Cullen (M49.5)

Brian & Valarie Wallin, Middle Cullen (M52.5)