2003 SUMMARY REPORT
of
OLD OAK LAKE

Lake County, Illinois

Prepared by the

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Old Oak Lake is a private lake located in unincorporated Mundelein (Fremont Township). It is part of the Squaw Creek drainage of the Fox River. Old Oak Lake is near the top of the Squaw Creek drainage. Old Oak Lake encompasses approximately 11.9 acres and has a shoreline length of 0.8 miles. The current maximum depth was determined to be 11.1 feet, as measured in June 2003.

Water clarity, as measured by Secchi disk transparency readings, averaged 5.08 feet for the season, which is above the county median (where 50% of the lakes are above and below this value) of 3.41 feet.

The 2003 average epilimnetic total phosphorus (TP) concentrations in Old Oak Lake (0.043 mg/L) were below the county median for near surface samples (0.059 mg/L). Algae, both filamentous and planktonic, were seen during the sampling season.

Nine aquatic plant species and several emergent shoreline plants were found. An aquatic plant herbicide treatment took place in the lake in 2003 greatly reducing the aquatic vegetation. When plants were present, coontail was the dominant plant in Old Oak Lake comprising 65% of all samples.

Approximately 74% of the shoreline of Old Oak Lake was classified as undeveloped. Shrub habitat comprised 50% of the shoreline with wetland (24%) and prairie (11%) habitat being the next most common types.

The shoreline was assessed for the degree and type of shoreline erosion. Although 20% of the shoreline has slight erosion, there was no moderately or severely eroded shoreline on Old Oak Lake.

Several exotics were found growing along the shoreline, including buckthorn, purple loosestrife, and reed canary grass. Removal or control of exotic species is recommended.

LAKE IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

Old Oak Lake (T44N, R10E, Section 32) is a private lake located east of Fairfield Road and south of Schwerman Road in unincorporated Mundelein (Fremont Township). It is part of the Squaw Creek drainage of the Fox River watershed. Old Oak Lake is near the top of the Squaw Creek drainage and has a watershed of approximately 46 acres, with a watershed to lake ratio of 3.9:1 (Figure 1). There are no inlets to the lake and a culvert on the western end of the lake serves as the only outlet. Water leaves the lake and flows into a series of small ponds to the northwest.

Old Oak Lake encompasses approximately 11.9 acres and has a shoreline length of 0.8 miles. The current maximum depth was determined to be 11.1 feet, as measured in June 2003. Since no bathymetric (depth contour) map of Old Oak Lake is known to exist, the volume of the lake was estimated based on data from lakes with known depths and volumes. Mean depth was obtained by multiplying the maximum depth by 0.5. Volume was obtained by multiplying the mean depth by the lake surface area. Based on these calculations, Old Oak Lake has an estimated mean depth of 5.6 feet and an estimated volume of 66.1 acre-feet. Lake elevation is approximately 865 feet above sea level.

Old Oak Lake is listed as an ADID (advanced identification) wetland by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This indicates that the lake and surrounding natural environments have potential to have high quality aquatic resources.

BRIEF HISTORY OF OLD OAK LAKE

Old Oak Lake was created in the1950s by dredging of a depression/wetland area. See Figure 2 for a 1939 photograph of the area. There are currently six homes around the lake. Each of the homeowners own a portion of the lake bottom. The lake has no public access.

Grass carp were stocked in Old Oak Lake to control aquatic vegetation in 1991 and 1994 at a stocking density of 10 fish per acre (120 fish total each time). More information on this will be discussed in the **Water Quality Assessment s**ection.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT AND HISTORICAL LAKE USES

Old Oak Lake is used primarily for fishing, ice skating, and the aesthetic enjoyment of the residents. No gas-powered watercraft are permitted on the lake, although electric motors are allowed. The homeowners manage the lake informally.

The composition of land uses within a lake’s watershed often influences its water quality. The major land use in the Old Oak Lake watershed (based on 2000 land use maps) is single family homes (51.4%), followed by water (25.7%), and forest/grassland (11.9%; Figure 3). The remaining land use types were wetlands (6.4%) and transportation (4.6%).

Figure 1. Watershed

Figure 2. 1939 photo

Figure 3. Land use.

The lake is treated with aquatic herbicides and algicides on an annual basis. Details of these treatments will be addressed in the **Aquatic Plant Assessment** section of this report.

An aeration system runs one diffuser in the lake. This system has one 0.25 horsepower compressor running at four cubic feet per minute. The diffuser is set at approximately eight feet deep. More information on this system will be discussed in the **Water Quality Assessment** section in this report.

LIMNOLOGICAL DATA – WATER QUALITY

Water samples were collected monthly from May - September at the deep-hole location near the center of the lake (Figure 4). See Appendix B for water sampling methods.

Old Oak Lake's water quality is similar to many lakes in Lake County (Table 1 in Appendix A). Most of the water quality parameters measured were near or below the averages of other lakes that we have monitored. Several important findings were noted.

Water clarity, as measured by Secchi disk transparency readings, averaged 5.08 feet for the season, which is above the county median (where 50% of the lakes are above and below this value) of 3.41 feet. The highest reading was in July (6.43 feet), while the lowest reading was in August (3.64 feet). In the two months with the poorest Secchi readings (August and September), we noticed algae blooms occurring in the lake as well as decaying vegetation (likely from the aquatic plant treatments that occurred earlier in the season) floating in the water which reduced clarity. To track future water quality trends, it is recommended that the lake become enrolled in the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program (VMLP), which trains a volunteer to measure the Secchi disk transparency readings from April to October. For more information see **Objective II: Illinois Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program.**

The lake was only stratified during the June and July sampling dates. In both months the thermocline was established at seven feet. The lake probably exhibits polymictic tendencies, meaning stratification and turnover occur repeatedly over the year. This may have been the result of climatic factors (i.e., wind and wave action, temperature) and the shallow nature of the lake. Lakes that do not stratify or stratify only weakly may have fewer problems with low dissolved oxygen (DO) problems or the build up and release of excessive nutrients.

The DO concentrations in Old Oak Lake indicate only minimal problems. Generally, concern arises when DO concentrations fall below 5 mg/L in the epilimnion. In 2003, all DO concentrations near the surface were above 5 mg/L, with the exception of August when concentrations were below 5 mg/L (4.85 mg/L at the surface). Anoxic conditions (where DO concentrations drop below 1 mg/L) did exist below eight feet in June, July, and August, and below nine feet in September. Since no bathymetric map of Old Oak Lake exists, an accurate assessment of the DO conditions cannot be made.

Figure 4. Sample site

The aeration system in Old Oak Lake is undersized. Based on a 11.9 acre lake, an aeration system designed to destratify the lake would need to have a 0.85 to 1.22 horsepower compressor with a 10.7 to 15.5 cubic feet per minute (CFM) capacity. Currently, the system has one compressor rated at 0.25 hp with a 4 CFM capacity. In 2003, the lake did not experience any severe DO problems, however, as mentioned previously the August DO concentrations were below 5 mg/L. The current diffuser location (approximately 600 feet from the deep-hole sampling location) is probably not influencing the DO concentrations at the sampling location. Owners of the system may look at adding a diffuser to the deep-hole location to maximize its effectiveness, since the location of the one diffuser is not destratifying the lake. The aerator should be turned off in the late-fall/early winter to allow the lake to completely freeze over. This will force resident Canada Geese to leave the area. Approximately one month after ice-over the aerator can be turned on again, if needed, until ice-off.

The 2003 average epilimnetic total phosphorus (TP) concentrations in Old Oak Lake (0.043 mg/L) were below the county median (0.059 mg/L) for near surface samples. Values above 0.03 mg/L in the epilimnion are considered sufficient to cause nuisance algae blooms. Algae, both filamentous and planktonic, were seen in the lake during the sampling season. The TP concentrations remained stable throughout the season with the exception of July when the concentration (0.068 mg/L) was nearly twice what was found in the other four months (range: 0.035-0.038 mg/L). This increase is likely due to the rainfall that occurred 48 hours prior to the July sampling, which may have washed nutrients (including phosphorus) from the surrounding watershed into the lake. Alternatively, the increase in TP in the epilimnion may have resulted from the polymictic conditions of the lake, which mixed nutrients from the hypolimnion into the epilimnion. Some increase in TP may have resulted from the herbicide treatment in June, which eliminated most of the aquatic plants in the lake. After plant treatments, algae blooms increased in July, August, and September.

High nutrient concentrations are usually indicative of water quality problems. Algae need light and nutrients, most importantly carbon, nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P), to grow. Light and carbon are not normally in short supply (limiting). This means that nutrients (N&P) are usually the limiting factors in algal growth. Nitrogen, as well as carbon, naturally occur in high concentrations and come from a variety of sources (soil, air, etc.) that are more difficult to control than sources of phosphorus. To compare the availability of these nutrients, a ratio of total nitrogen to total phosphorus is used (TN: TP). Ratios < 10:1 indicate nitrogen is limiting. Ratios of >15:1 indicate phosphorus is limiting. Ratios >10:1, <15:1 indicate that there is enough of both nutrients for excessive algal growth. The average ratio between total nitrogen and total phosphorus for Old Oak Lake in 2003 was 24:1, indicating a phosphorus-limited system. Lakes that are phosphorus-limited may be easier to manage, since controlling phosphorus is more feasible than controlling nitrogen or carbon.

The (relatively) low concentrations of nutrients in Old Oak Lake are likely the result of the position of the lake in the watershed (near the top) and that there are no major inlets, particularly stormwater inlets. Thus, the water entering the lake comes from rainwater and run-off from the adjacent land, which is mostly undeveloped, except for the six homes around the lake. One of the largest threats to the lake is probably fertilizer (which is often high in phosphorus) applied to the lawns near the lake. It is recommended that homeowners use a no-phosphorus fertilizer on their lawns.

Water levels on Old Oak Lake fluctuated throughout the season. The maximum one-month change occurred between August and September when the lake level dropped by 5.25 inches. The maximum change over the season (May to September) was a 10.5-inch decrease. Significant changes in water levels may have a negative impact on water quality. In addition, lakes with fluctuating water levels potentially have more shoreline erosion problems.

Rain events probably contribute additional sediment or nutrients (like phosphorus) to the lake, which may have influenced the water sample results. However, rain occurred within 48 hours prior to water sampling only in May (0.34 inches) and July (1.27 inches) as recorded at the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission rain gage in Wauconda. As mentioned previously, the increase of TP in July may have been the result of the stormwater runoff which occurred prior to sampling.

Based on data collected in 2003, standard classification indices compiled by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) were used to determine the current condition of Old Oak Lake. A general overall index that is commonly used is called a trophic state index or TSI. The TSI index classifies the lake into one of four categories: oligotrophic (nutrient-poor, biologically unproductive), mesotrophic (intermediate nutrient availability and biological productivity), eutrophic (nutrient-rich, highly productive), or hypereutrophic (extremely nutrient-rich productive). This index can be calculated using total phosphorus values obtained at or near the surface. The TSIp for Old Oak Lake in 2003 classified it as a eutrophic lake (TSIp = 58.4). Eutrophic lakes are the most common types of lakes throughout the lower Midwest, and they are particularly common among manmade lakes. See Table 2 in Appendix A for a ranking of average TSIp values for Lake County lakes (Old Oak Lake is currently #46 of 130). This ranking is only a relative assessment of the lakes in the county. The current rank of a lake is dependent upon many factors including lake origin, water source, nutrient loads, and morphometric features (volume, depth, substrate, etc.). Thus, a small shallow manmade lake with high nutrient loads could not expect to achieve a high ranking even with intensive management.

In Old Oak Lake, the IEPA aquatic life impairment index was low, indicating a full degree of support for all aquatic organisms in the lake. Likewise, the swimming and recreation indices indicated a full degree of support, and thus, the overall use index for the lake was full support.

LIMNOLOGICAL DATA – AQUATIC PLANT ASSESSMENT

Aquatic plant species presence and distribution in Old Oak Lake were assessed monthly from May through September 2003 (see Appendix B for methods). Nine aquatic plant species and several emergent shoreline plants were found (see Table 3, below). Terrestrial shoreline plants were also noted, but not quantified.

An aquatic plant herbicide treatment took place in the lake in 2003, which greatly reduced the aquatic vegetation. When plants were present, coontail was the dominant plant in Old Oak Lake comprising 65% of all samples (Table 4). Curlyleaf pondweed, an exotic and the next most common plant being found in 29% of all sites, although most of these were found in May prior to herbicide treatments. Slender naiad was found in 16% of all samples, all of them after June which is typical of the naiads since they are late-emerging plants. Chara, a macro-algae, and Eurasian water milfoil (EWM), an exotic, were also found although in small numbers. EWM can be particularly problematic and its growth should be closely monitored.

The herbicide treatment occurred on June 14, 2003, and consisted of a mix of diquat (Reward®) and endothall (Aquathol K®) with the addition of an algicide (Captain®). The exact amounts and information on additional treatments is not available. During the July plant sampling, we noticed the significant reduction in aquatic plants present in the lake. In addition, during the August and September sampling dates decaying plant material was observed floating in the water. The (short-term) impact of the treatment appeared to have been relatively low since the water quality data remained relatively unchanged after the treatment with the exception of the TP concentrations in July. However, the habitat for zooplankton, macroinvertebrates, fish, and wildlife was significantly reduced by the elimination of aquatic plants.

A balanced aquatic plant management plan in needed for Old Oak Lake. The challenge is to address the desires of the homeowners of the lake, while managing for the lake's overall ecological health. It is recommended that some native aquatic plants (i.e., American pondweed) be allowed to grow and expand, while controlling those that become invasive and interfere with the aesthetic qualities of the lake. This may be achieved by spot treating areas of the lake where excessive plant growth is occurring. Healthy plant populations in the lake may result in cost savings due to the need for less herbicides and algaecides, since the native aquatic plants infrequently grow to nuisance levels (with the exception of coontail) and that the plants will compete with the algae for available nutrients. More information can be found in **Objective IV: Aquatic Plant Management Options.**

During the plant sampling, we searched for the milfoil weevil (*Euhrychiopsis lecontei*) on EWM plants. This weevil attacks the tip and stem of the plant and is currently being used as a biological control for EWM in many lakes in the Midwest. The weevils are found naturally in many lakes. Unfortunately, no weevils were found in Old Oak Lake in 2003.

The 1% light levels (the point where plant photosynthesis ceases) remained relatively consistent throughout the summer with the deepest light penetration occurring in August and September when light levels reached the lake bottom. Even in May, June, and July the 1% light levels reached nine feet, which is near the bottom. Thus, the potential aquatic plant coverage along the lake bottom is 100%, however the previously mentioned herbicide treatments significantly reduced the coverage to less than 5%. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources recommends 25-40% aquatic plant coverage to maintain ideal fish habitat condition. Beneficial native plants (both submersed and emergent) are present in the lake and should be encouraged to expand to enhance habitats for fish and other wildlife and well as improve water quality.

As mentioned previously, grass carp were introduced into the lake in the 1991 and 1994, when they were stocked at approximately 12 fish per acre. Residents observed that the carp’s effectiveness at controlling the aquatic vegetation was limited. This may be due to the fact that the IDNR stocking recommendations are higher than those used in the lake. The stocking rates depend on the species of plants targeted for control. If the dominant plant was curlyleaf pondweed, the stocking recommendation is 16 per acre in the initial stocking, then 16 per acre on the second stocking with five years between stockings. However, if the dominant plant was coontail, then the stocking recommendation is 61 10-inch fish per acre for the first stocking and 20 per acre on the second stocking with six years between stockings. Based on our 2003 sampling with coontail being the dominant species, the stocking rates applied in 1991 and 1994 were too low. We observed one of these carp in May, however it is unknown how many of these herbivorous carp are still alive or what impact they may be having on the plant communities in the lake. Given the fact that the herbicide treatment in 2003 greatly reduced the aquatic plant coverage, the remaining grass carp may have minimal food sources and may die out. Restocking these fish is not recommended.

Floristic quality index (FQI; Swink and Wilhelm 1994) is an assessment tool designed to evaluate the closeness that the flora of an area is to that of undisturbed conditions. It can be used to: 1) identify natural areas, 2) compare the quality of different sites or different locations within a single site, 3) monitor long-term floristic trends, and 4) monitor habitat restoration efforts. Each aquatic plant in a lake is assigned a number between 1 and 10 (10 indicating the plant species most sensitive to disturbance). This is done for every floating and submersed plant species found in the lake. These numbers are averaged and multiplied by the square root of the number of species present to calculate an FQI. A high FQI number indicates that there are a large number of sensitive, high quality plant species present in the lake. Non-native species were counted in the FQI calculations for Lake County lakes. In 2003, Old Oak Lake had a FQI of 12.7. The median FQI of lakes that we have studied from 2000-2003 is 14.0.

Table 3. Aquatic and shoreline plants on Old Oak Lake, May - September 2003.

<u>Aquatic Plants</u>	
Coontail	*Ceratophyllum demersum*
Chara	*Chara* sp.
Small Duckweed	*Lemna minor*
Eurasian Water Milfoil#	*Myriophyllum spicatum*
Slender Naiad	*Najas flexilis*
Curlyleaf Pondweed#	*Potamogeton crispus*
American Pondweed	*Potamogeton nodosus*
White Water Crowfoot	*Ranunculus longirostris*
Sago Pondweed	*Stuckenia pectinatus*
<u>Shoreline Plants</u>	
Swamp Milkweed	*Asclepias incarnata*
Common Milkweed	*Asclepias syriaca*
Aster	*Aster* sp.
Box Elder	*Acer negundo*
Oxeye Daisy	*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*
Dogwood	*Cornus* sp.
Slender Spikerush	*Eleocharis acicularis*
Hairy Willowherb#	*Epilobium hirsutum*
True Bonset	*Eupatorium perfoliatum*
Jewelweed	*Impatiens pallida*
Blue Flag Iris	*Iris hexagona*
Blue Lobelia	*Lobelia siphilitica*
Purple Loosestrife#	*Lythrum salicaria*
Wild Bergamot	*Monarda fistulosa*
Sensitive Fern	*Onoclea sensibilis*
Reed Canary Grass#	*Phalaris arundinacea*
Black Cherry	*Prunus serotina*
Buckthorn#	*Rhamnus cathartica*
Staghorn Sumac	*Rhus typhina*
Willow	*Salix* sp.
Softstem Bulrush	*Scirpus validus*
Canada Goldenrod	*Solidago candensis*
Sow Thistle#	*Sonchus* sp.
Cattail	*Typha* sp.
Elm	*Ulmus* sp.
Blue Vervain	*Verbena hastata*
Wild Grape	*Vitis* sp.

 # Exotic species

LIMNOLOGICAL DATA – SHORELINE ASSESSMENT

A shoreline assessment was conducted in August 2003 to determine the condition of the lake shoreline (see Appendix B for methods). Of particular interest was the condition of the shoreline at the water/land interface.

Approximately 74% of the shoreline of Old Oak Lake was classified as undeveloped. Shrub habitat comprised 50% of the shoreline with wetland (24%) and prairie (11%) habitat being the next most common types (Figure 5). The remaining types (beach, buffer, lawn, riprap, and seawall) were each less than 10% of the shoreline. Buffer habitat, which is a strip of unmowed vegetation preferably consisting of native plants located at the water’s edge, should be expanded in areas, particularly where manicured lawns are located. Buffer habitat can help filter the nutrients and pollutants from the surrounding watershed before they enter the lake, as well as providing habitat that is favored by many wildlife species, but not favored by residential Canada geese.

The shoreline was assessed for the degree and type of shoreline erosion. Although 20% of the shoreline was classified as slightly eroding, there was no moderately or severely eroded shoreline on Old Oak Lake (Figure 6). This is primarily due to the small size of the lake and that it is relatively sheltered due to the surrounding topography and habitats around the lake. The slightly eroded areas do not need to be immediately addressed but should be monitored for additional erosion in the future.

Several exotics were found growing along the shoreline, including buckthorn, purple loosestrife, and reed canary grass. Similar to aquatic exotics, these terrestrial exotics are detrimental to the native plant ecosystems around the lake. Removal or control of exotic species is recommended. More information can be found in **Objective V: Eliminate or Control Exotic Species**.

LIMNOLOGICAL DATA – WILDLIFE ASSESSMENT

Good numbers of wildlife, particularly birds, were noted on and around Old Oak Lake. See Appendix B for methods. Several of the species listed in Table 5 (below) were seen during spring or fall migration and were assumed not to be nesting around the lake.

Habitat around Old Oak Lake was good, due to the limited development around the lake, which provides diverse communities that wildlife may use. Additional habitat may be created around the lake, such as erecting birdhouses and growing buffer habitat. More information can be found in **Objective VI: Enhance Wildlife Habitat Conditions**.

We did not conduct fish surveys in the lake in 2003. However, as mentioned previously, a grass carp was observed.

Figure 5.

Figure 6.

Table 5. Wildlife species observed on Old Oak Lake, April – September 2003.

Birds	
Canada Goose	*Branta canadensis*
Mallard	*Anas platyrhnchos*
Ring-necked Duck	*Aythya collaris*
Greater Scaup	*Aythya marila*
Great Blue Heron	*Ardea herodias*
Green Heron	*Butorides striatus*
Spotted Sandpiper	*Actitis macularia*
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Red-headed Woodpecker	*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*
Common Flicker	*Colaptes auratus*
Red-bellied Woodpecker	*Melanerpes carolinus*
Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*
Eastern Kingbird	*Tyrannus tyrannus*
Eastern Phoebe	*Sayornis phoebe*
Eastern Pewee	*Contopus virens*
Willow Flycatcher	*Empidonax traillii*
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
Rough-wing Swallow	*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*
Bank Swallow	*Riparia riparia*
American Crow	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*
Blue Jay	*Cyanocitta cristata*
Black-capped Chickadee	*Poecile atricapillus*
White-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta carolinensis*
Golden-crowned Kinglet	*Regulus satrapa*
Catbird	*Dumetella carolinensis*
American Robin	*Turdus migratorius*
Cedar Waxwing	*Bombycilla cedrorum*
Yellow-rumped Warbler	*Dendroica coronata*
Canada Warbler	*Wilsonia canadensis*
Yellow Warbler	*Dendroica petechia*
Northern Waterthrush	*Seiurus noveboracensis*
Red-winged Blackbird	*Agelaius phoeniceus*
Brown-headed Cowbird	*Molothrus ater*
Common Grackle	*Quiscalus quiscula*
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*
Northern Oriole	*Icterus galbula*
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
Northern Cardinal	*Cardinalis cardinalis*
American Goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*
Chipping Sparrow	*Spizella passerina*
Song Sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*

Table 5. Wildlife species observed on Old Oak Lake, April – September 2003 (cont'd).

Mammals	
Eastern Chipmunk	*Tamias striatus*
Amphibians	
None noted.	
Reptiles	
Painted Turtle	*Chrysemys picta*
Insects	
Cicadas	Cicadidae
Dragonfly	Anisoptera
Fish	
Grass Carp	*Ctenopharyngodon idella*

EXISTING LAKE QUALITY PROBLEMS

- *Lack of a Quality Bathymetric Map*

  A bathymetric (depth contour) map is an essential tool for effective lake management since it provides critical information on the morphometric features of the lake (i.e., acreage, depth, volume, etc.). This information is particularly important when intensive management techniques (i.e., chemical treatments for plant or algae control, aeration, dredging, fish stocking, etc.) are part of the lake's overall management plan. Currently, no bathymetric map of Old Oak Lake exists.

- *Limited Aquatic Vegetation*

  While nine species of aquatic plants were found in Old Oak Lake, the aquatic plant treatment in June greatly reduced the populations in the lake. Beneficial native plants (both submersed and emergent) are present in the lake and should be encouraged to expand to enhance habitats for fish and other wildlife and well as improve water quality. An aquatic plant management plan is needed to balance the needs of the homeowners with the ecological health of the lake.

- *Invasive Shoreline Plant Species*

  Numerous exotic plant species (i.e., buckthorn, purple loosestrife, and reed canary grass) were found on the shores of Old Oak Lake. These three species are particularly problematic as they outcompete native plants and offer little value in terms of shoreline stabilization or wildlife habitat. Plants should be removed and replaced with native shoreline plants.

POTENTIAL OBJECTIVES FOR THE OLD OAK LAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN

I. Create a Bathymetric Map Including a Morphometric Table
II. Illinois Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program
III. Nuisance Algae Management Options
IV. Aquatic Plant Management Options
V. Control Exotic Plant Species
VI. Enhance Wildlife Habitat Conditions

OPTIONS FOR ACHIEVING THE LAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

Objective I: Create a Bathymetric Map Including a Morphometric Table

A bathymetric map (depth contour) map is an essential tool for effective lake management since it provides critical information about the physical features of the lake, such as depth, surface area, volume, etc. This information is particularly important when intensive management techniques (i.e., chemical treatments for plant or algae control, dredging, fish stocking, etc.) are part of the lake's overall management plan. Some bathymetric maps for lakes in Lake County do exist, but they are frequently old, outdated and do not accurately represent the current features of the lake. Maps can be created by agencies like the Lake County Health Department - Lakes Management Unit or other companies. Costs vary, but can range from $3,000-10,000 depending on lake size.

Objective II: Participate in the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program

In 1981, the Illinois Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program (VLMP) was established by the Illinois Environmental Protection agency (Illinois EPA) to gather fundamental information on Illinois inland lakes, and to provide an educational program for citizens. Annually, approximately 165 lakes (out of 3,041 lakes in Illinois) are sampled by approximately 300 citizen volunteers. The volunteers are primarily lake shore residents, lake owners/managers, members of environmental groups, public water supply personnel, and citizens with interest in a particular lake.

The VLMP relies on volunteers to gather a variety of information on their chosen lake. The primary measurement is Secchi disk transparency or Secchi depth. Analysis of the Secchi disk measurement provides an indication of the general water quality condition of the lake, as well as the amount of usable habitat available for fish and other aquatic life.

Microscopic plants and animals, water color, and suspended sediments are factors that interfere with light penetration through the water column and lessen the Secchi disk depth. As a rule, one to three times the Secchi depth is considered the lighted or euphotic zone of the lake. In this region of the lake there is enough light to allow plants to survive and produce oxygen. Water below the lighted zone can be expected to have little or no dissolved oxygen. Other observations such as water color, suspended algae and sediment, aquatic plants, and odor are also recorded. The sampling season is May through October with volunteer measurements taken twice a month. After volunteers have completed one year of the basic monitoring program, they are qualified to participate in the Expanded Monitoring Program. In the expanded program, selected volunteers are trained to collect water samples that are shipped to the Illinois EPA laboratory for analysis of total and volatile suspended solids, total phosphorus, nitrate-nitrite nitrogen and ammonia nitrogen. Other parameters that are part of the expanded program include dissolved oxygen, temperature, and zebra mussel monitoring. Additionally, chlorophyll *a* monitoring has been added to the regiment of selected lakes. These water quality parameters are routinely measured by lake scientists to help determine the general health of the lake ecosystem.

Currently the number of volunteers in the six county northeast Illinois region has reached its limit with regard to how many volunteers NIPC can handle. New lakes wishing to be part of the VLMP will be taken on and trained by the Lake County Health Department Lakes Management Unit (LMU). If you would like to be placed on this training list or would simply like more information, contact the Lakes Management Unit Local Coordinator:

VLMP Regional Coordinator:
Holly Hudson
Northeast Illinois Planning Commission
222 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1800
Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 454-0400

Objective III: Nuisance Algae Management Options

The growth of nuisance or excessive algae can cause a number of problems. Excessive algal growth can cause decreases in water clarity and light penetration. This can lead to several major problems such as loss of aquatic plants, decline in fishery health, and interference with recreational activities. Health hazards, such as swimmer's itch and other skin irritations have been linked to nuisance algae growth. Normally, excessive/nuisance algae growth is a sign of larger problems such excessive nutrients and/or lack of aquatic plants. Some treatment methods, such as copper sulfate, are only quick remedies to the problem. Solving the problem of nuisance algal growth involves treating the factors that cause the growth not the algae itself. Long-term solutions typically include an integrated approach such as alum treatments, revegetation with aquatic plants, and limiting external sources of nutrients. Interestingly enough, these long-term management strategies are seldom used, typically because of their high initial costs. Instead, the cheap, quick fix of using copper sulfate, though temporary, is much more widely used. However, the costs of continually applying copper sulfate over years, even decades, can eventually far exceed the costs of a slower acting, eventually more effective, integrated approach.

As with aquatic plant management techniques, algae management practices have both positive and negative characteristics. If used properly, they can be beneficial to a lake's well being. If misused or abused, they all share similar outcomes - negative impacts to the lake. Putting together a good management plan should not be rushed. Plans should consist of a realistic set of goals well thought out before implementation. The plan should be based on the management goals of the lake and involve usage issues (beaches, boat ramps, etc.), habitat maintenance/restoration issues, and nutrient levels. For an algal management plan to achieve long term success, follow up is critical. The management of the lake's algae problem does not end once the blooms and/or mats have been reduced/eliminated. It is critical to continually monitor problematic areas for regrowth and treat as necessary. An association or property owner should not always expect immediate results. A quick fix of the algal problem may not always be in the best interest of the lake. Sometimes the best solutions take several seasons to properly address the problem. The management options covered below are commonly used techniques and those that are coming into wider acceptance, and have been used in Lake County. There are other algae management options that are not covered below as they are not very effective, unproven, unfounded, or are too experimental to be widely used.

Option 1: No Action

With a no action management plan nothing would be done to control the nuisance algae regardless of type and extent. Nuisance algae, planktonic and/or filamentous, could continue to grow until epidemic proportions are reached. Growth limitations of the algae and the characteristics of the lake itself (light penetration, nutrient levels.) will dictate the extent of growth. Unlike aquatic plants, algae are not normally bound by physical factors such as substrate type. The areas in which filamentous and thick surface planktonic blooms (scum) occur can be affected by wind and wave action if strong enough. However, under normal conditions, with no action, both filamentous and planktonic algal blooms can spread to cover 100% of the surface. This could cause major inhibition of the lakes recreational uses and impact fish and other aquatic organisms adversely.

Pros

There are positive aspects associated with the no action option for nuisance algae management. The first, and most obvious, is that there is no cost. However, if an active management plan for algae control were eventually needed, the cost would be substantially higher than if the no action plan had been followed in the first place. Another benefit of this option would be the lack of environmental manipulation. Under the no action option, chemicals or introduction of any organisms would not take place. Use of the lake would continue as normal unless blooms worsened. In this case, activities such as swimming might have to be suspended due to an increase in health risks. Other problems such as strong odors (blue-green algae) might also increase in frequency.

Cons

Under the no action option, if nuisance algae becomes wide spread and able to reach epidemic proportions, there will be many negative impacts on the lake. The fishery of the lake may become stunted due the to lack of quality forage fish habitat and reduced predation. This will cause an explosion in the small fish population and with food resources not increasing, growth of fish will be reduced. Fish kills can result from toxins released by some species such as some blue-green algae. Blue-green algae can also produced toxins that are harmful to other algae. This allows blue-green algae to quickly dominate a body of water. Decreased dissolved oxygen levels, due to high biological oxygen demand from the excessive algae growth, will also have negative impacts on the aquatic life. Wildlife populations will also be negatively impacted by dense growths of algae. Birds and waterfowl will have difficulty finding quality plants for food or in locating prey within the turbid green waters. Additionally, some species, such as blue-green algae, are poor sources of food for zooplankton and fish.

Water quality could also be negatively impacted with the implementation of a no action option. Decomposition of organic matter and release of nutrients upon algal death is a probable outcome. Large nutrient release with algae die back could lead to lake-wide increases of internal nutrient load. This could in turn, could increase the frequency or severity of other blooms. In addition, decomposition of massive amounts of algae, filamentous and planktonic, will lead to a depletion of dissolved oxygen in the lake. This can cause fish stress, and eventually, if stress is frequent or severe enough, fish kills. All of the impacts above could in turn have negative impacts on numerous aspects of the lake's ecosystem.

In addition to ecological impacts, many physical lake uses will be negatively impacted. Boating could be nearly impossible without becoming entangled in thick mats of filamentous algae. Swimming could also become increasingly difficult and unsafe due to thick mats and reduction in visibility by planktonic blooms. Fishing could become more and more exasperating due in part to the thick mats and stunted fish populations. In addition, the aesthetics of the lake will also decline due to large areas of the lake covered by large green mats and/or blooms of algae and the odors that may develop, such as with large blue-green blooms. The combination of above events could cause property values on the lake to suffer. Property values on lakes with algae problems have been shown to decrease by as much as 15-20%.

Costs
No cost will be incurred by implementing the no action management option.

Option 2: Algicides
Algicides are a quick and inexpensive way to temporarily treat nuisance algae. Copper sulfate ($CuSO_4$) and chelated copper products are the two main algicides in use. These two compounds are sold by a variety of brand names by a number of different companies. There is also a non-copper based algaecide on the market called GreenClean™ from BIOsafe Systems, which contains the active ingredient sodium carbonate peroxyhydrate. Regardless of active ingredient, they all work the same and act as contact killers. This means that the product has to come into contact with the algae to be affective. Algicides come in two forms, granular and liquid. Granular herbicides are spread by hand or machine over an effected area. They can also be placed in a porous bag (such as a burlap sack) and dragged though the water in order to dissolve and disperse the product. Granular algicides are mainly used on filamentous algae where they are spread over the mats. As the granules dissolve, they kill the algae. Liquid algicides, which are much more widely used, are mixed with a known amount of water to achieve a known concentration. The mixture is then sprayed onto/into the water. Liquid algicides are used on both filamentous and planktonic algae. Liquid algaecides are often mixed with herbicides and applied together to save on time and money. The effectiveness of some herbicides is enhanced when mixed with an algicide. When applying an algicide it is imperative that the label is completely read and followed. If too much of the lake is treated at any one time an oxygen crash may occur. This may cause fish kills due to decomposition of treated algae. Additionally, treatments should never be made when blooms/mats are at their fullest extent. It is best to divide the lake into at least two sections depending on the size of the lake. Larger lakes will need to be divided into more sections. Then treat the lake one section at a time allowing at least two weeks between treatments. Furthermore, application of algicides should never be done in extremely hot weather (>90^oF) or when D.O. concentrations are low. This will help lessen the likelihood of an oxygen crash and resulting fish kills. When possible, treatments should be made as early in the season as possible when temperature and D.O. concentrations are adequate. It is best to treat in spring or when the blooms/mats starts to appear there by killing the algae before they become a problem.

Pros
When used properly, algicides can be a powerful tool in management of nuisance algae growth. A properly implemented plan can often provide season long control with minimal applications. Another benefit of using algicides is their low

costs. The fisheries and waterfowl populations of the lake would greatly benefit due to a decrease in nuisance algal blooms. By reducing the algae, clarity would increase. This in turn would allow the native aquatic plants to return to the lake. Newly established stands of plants would improve spawning habitat and food source availability for fish. Waterfowl population would greatly benefit from increases in quality food sources, such as large-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton amplifolius*) and sago pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*). Additionally, copper products, at proper dosages, are selective in the sense that they do not affect aquatic vascular plants and wildlife.

By implementing a good management plan, usage opportunities for the lake would increase. Activities such as boating and swimming would improve due to the removal of thick blooms and/or mats of algae. Health risks associated with excessive algae growth (toxins, reduced visibility, etc.) The quality of fishing may recover due to improved habitat and feeding opportunities. In addition to increased usage opportunities, overall aesthetics of the lake would improve, potentially increasing property values.

Cons

The most obvious drawback of using algicides is the input of chemicals into the lake. Even though the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) approved these chemicals for use, human error and overuse can make them unsafe and bring about undesired outcomes. By continually killing particular algal species, lake managers may unknowingly be creating a larger problem. As the algae are continuously exposed to copper, some species are becoming more and more tolerant. This results in the use of higher concentrations in order to achieve adequate control, which can be unhealthy for the lake. In other instances, by eliminating one type of algae, lake managers are finding that other species that are even more problematic are filling the empty gap. These species that fill the gap can often be more difficult to control due to an inherent resistance to copper products. Additionally, excessive use of copper products can lead to a build up of copper in lake sediment. This can cause problems for activities such as dredging. Due to a large amount of copper in the sediment, special permits and disposal methods would have to be utilized.

Costs

To calculate total cost it will be necessary to calculate surface acreage (SA) or acre-feet (AF) of the area(s) to be treated according to each lake's aquatic plant management plan. The chelated copper products (Clearigate®, Cutrine®, Captain®, K-Tea®, Komeen®) cost $35-45 per gallon and are generally applied at 0.5-2.5 gallons per acre-foot depending on the product.

Option 3: Alum Treatment

A possible remedy to excessive algal growth is to eliminate or greatly reduce the amount of phosphorus. This can be accomplished by using aluminum sulfate (alum). Alum does not directly kill algae as copper sulfate does. Instead, alum binds phosphorus making it unavailable, thus reducing algal growth. Alum binds water-borne phosphorus and forms a flocculent layer that settles on the bottom. This floc layer can then prevent sediment bound phosphorus from entering the water column. Phosphorus inactivation using alum has been in use for 25 years. However, cost and sometimes unreliable results deterred its wide spread use. Currently, alum is commonly being used in ponds and small lakes, and its use in larger lakes is increasing. Alum treatment typically lasts 1 to 20 years depending on various parameters. Lakes with low mean depth to surface area ratio benefit more quickly from alum applications, while lakes with high mean depth to surface area ration (thermally stratified lakes) will see more longevity from an alum application due to isolation of the flocculent layer. Lakes with small watersheds are also better candidates because external phosphorus sources can be limited. Alum treatments must be carefully planned and carried out by an experienced professional. If not properly done, there may be many detrimental side effects.

Pros

Phosphorus inactivation is a possible long-term solution for controlling nuisance algae and increasing water clarity. Alum treatments can last as long as 20 years. This makes alum more cost effective in the long-term compared to continual treatment with algaecides. Studies have shown reductions in phosphorus concentrations by 66% in spring and 68% in summer. Chlorophyll *a*, a measure of algal biomass, was reduced by 61%. Reduction in algal biomass caused an increase in dissolved oxygen and a 79% increase in Secchi disk readings. Effects of alum treatments can be seen in as little as a few days. The increase in clarity can have many positive effects on the lake's ecosystem. With increased clarity, plant populations could expand or reestablish. This in turn would improve fish habitat and provide improved food/habitat sources for other organisms. Recreational activities such as swimming and fishing would be improved due to increased water clarity and healthy plant populations. Typically, there is a slight invertebrate decline immediately following treatment but populations recover fully by the following year.

Cons

There are several drawbacks to alum. External nutrient inputs must also be reduced or eliminated for alum to provide long-term effectiveness. With larger watersheds this could prove to be physically and financially impossible. Phosphorus inactivation may be shortened by excessive plant growth or motorboat traffic, which can disturb the flocculent layer and allow phosphorus to be released. Also, lakes that are shallow, non-stratified, and wind blown typically do not achieve long term control due to disruption of the flocculent layer. If alum is not properly applied toxicity problems may occur. Typically aluminum toxicity occurs if pH is below 6 or above 9. Most of Lake County's lakes are in this safe range. However, at these pHs, special precautions must be taken when applying alum. By adding the incorrect amounts of alum, pH of the lake could drastically change. Due to these dangers, it is highly recommended that a lake management professional plans and administers the alum treatment.

Costs

Morphometic data is required to make proper calculations. Before this option is addressed a bathymetric map of the lake is needed.

Option 4: Revegetation With Native Aquatic Plants

A healthy native plant population can reduce algal growth. Many lakes with long-standing algal problems have a very sparse plant population or none at all. This is due to reduction in light penetration brought about by years of excessive algal blooms and/or mats. Revegetation should only be done when existing nuisance algal blooms are under control using one of the above management options. If the lake has poor clarity due to excessive algal growth or turbidity, these problems must be addressed before a revegetation plan is undertaken. Without adequate light penetration, revegetation will not work. At maximum, planting depth light levels must be greater than 1-5% of the surface light levels for plant growth and photosynthesis. If aquatic herbicides are being used to control what vegetation does exist there use should be scaled back or abandoned all together. This will allow the vegetation to grow back, which will help in controlling the algae in addition to other positive impacts associated with a healthy plant population.

There are two methods by which reestablishment can be accomplished. The first is use of existing plant populations to revegetate other areas within the lake. Plants from one part of the lake are allowed to naturally expand into adjacent areas thereby filling the niche left by the nuisance algae. Another technique utilizing existing plants is to transplant vegetation from one area to another. The second method of reestablishment is to import native plants from an outside source. A variety of plants can be ordered from nurseries that specialize in native aquatic plants. These plants are available in several forms such as seeds, roots, and small plants. These two methods can be used in conjunction with one another in order to increase both quantity and biodiversity of plant populations. Additionally, plantings must be protected from herbivory by waterfowl and other wildlife. Simple cages made out of wooden or metal stakes and chicken wire are erected around planted areas for at least one season. The cages are removed once the plants are established and less vulnerable. If large-scale revegetation is needed it would be best to use a consultant to plan and conduct the restoration. Table 6 lists common, native plants that should be considered when developing a revegetation plan. Included in this list are emergent shoreline vegetation (rushes, cattails, etc) and submersed aquatic plants (pondweeds, *Vallisneria*, etc). Prices, planting depths, and planting densities are included and vary depending on plant species.

Pros

By revegetating newly opened areas that were once infested with nuisance species, the lake will benefit in several ways. Once established, expanded native plant populations will help to control growth of nuisance algae by shading and competition for resources. This provides a more natural approach as compared to other management options. In addition, using established native plants to control excessive invasive plant growth is less expensive than other options. Expanded native plant populations will also help with sediment stabilization. This in turn will have a positive effect on water clarity by reducing suspended solids and nutrients that decrease clarity and cause excessive algal growth. Properly revegetating shallow water areas with plants such as cattails, bulrushes, and water lilies can help reduce wave action that can lead to shoreline erosion. Increases in desirable vegetation will increase the plant biodiversity and also provide better quality habitat and food sources for fish and other wildlife. Recreational uses of the lake such as fishing and boating will also improve due to the improvement in water quality and the suppression of weedy species.

Cons

There are few negative impacts to revegetating a lake. One possible drawback is the possibility of new vegetation expanding to nuisance levels and needing control. However, this is an unlikely outcome. Another drawback could be high costs if extensive revegetation is needed using imported plants. If a consultant were used costs would be substantially higher. Additional costs could be associated with constructing proper herbivory protection measures.

Costs

See Table 6 for plant pricing. Costs will be higher if a consultant/nursery is contracted for design and labor. Additional costs will include herbivory protection materials such as metal posts and protective wire mesh (chicken wire).

Objective IV: Aquatic Plant Management Options

All aquatic plant management techniques have both positive and negative characteristics. If used properly, they can all be beneficial to a lake's well being. If misused or abused, they all share similar outcomes - negative impacts to the lake. Putting together a good aquatic plant management plan should not be rushed. Plans should consist of a realistic set of goals well thought out before implementation. The plan should be based on the management goals of the lake and involve usage issues, habitat maintenance/restoration, and limitations of the lake. For an aquatic plant management plan to achieve long term success, follow up is critical. A good aquatic plant management plan considers both the short and long-term needs of the lake. The management of the lake's vegetation does not end once the nuisance vegetation has been reduced/eliminated. It is critical to continually monitor problematic areas for regrowth and remove as necessary. An association or property owner should not always expect immediate results. A quick fix of the vegetation problems may not always be in the best interest of the lake. Sometimes the best solutions take several seasons to properly solve the problem. The management options covered below are commonly used techniques that are coming into wider acceptance and have been used in Lake County. There are other plant management options that are not covered below as they are not very effective, unreliable, or are too experimental to be widely used.

Option 1: No Action

If the lake is dominated by *native*, *non-invasive* species, the no action option could be ideal. Under these circumstances native plant populations could flourish and keep nuisance plants from becoming problematic. However, if a no action aquatic plant management plan in a lake with non-native, invasive species, nothing would be done to control the aquatic plant population of the lake regardless of the type and extent of the vegetation. Nuisance vegetation could continue to grow until epidemic proportions are reached. Growth limitations of the plant and the characteristics of the lake itself (light penetration, lake morphology, substrate type, etc.) will dictate the extent of infestation. Rooted plants, such as curly leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) and elodea (*Elodea canadensis*), will be bound by physical factors such as substrate type and light availability. Plants such as Eurasian water milfoil and coontail, which can grow unrooted at the surface regardless of water depth, could grow to cover 100% of the water's surface. This could cause major inhibition of the lakes recreational uses and impact fish and other aquatic organisms adversely.

Pros

There are positive aspects associated with the no action option for plant management. The first, and most obvious, is that there is no cost. However, if an active management plan for vegetation control were eventually needed, the cost would be substantially higher than if the no action plan had not been followed in the first place. Another benefit of this option would be the lack of environmental manipulation. Under the no action option, no chemicals, mechanical alteration, or introduction of any organisms would take place. This is important since studies have shown that nuisance plants are more likely to invade disrupted areas. If the lake contains native, non-invasive plant species, expansion of the native plant population would increase the overall biodiversity and health of the lake. Habitat, breeding areas, and food source availability would greatly improve. Use of the lake would continue as normal and in some cases might improve (fishing) if native plants keep “weedy” plants under control.

An additional benefit of the no action option is the possible improvement in water quality. Turbidity could decrease and clarity should increase due to sediment stabilization by the plant’s roots. Algal blooms could be reduced due to decreased resource availability and sediment stabilization. However, the occurrence of filamentous algae may increase/remain stable due to their surface growth habitat. The lake’s fishery could improve due to habitat availability, which in turn would have numerous positive effects on the rest of the lake’s ecosystem.

Cons

Under the no action option, if nuisance vegetation is dominant in the lake and were uninhibited and able to reach epidemic proportions, there will be many negative impacts on the lake. By their weedy nature, the nuisance plants would out-compete the more desirable native plants. This could eventually, drastically reduce or even eliminate the native plant population of the lake and reduce the lake’s biodiversity. The fishery of the lake may become stunted due the to lack of quality forage fish habitat and reduced predation. Predation will decrease due to the difficulty of finding prey in the dense stands of vegetation. This will cause an explosion in the small fish population and with food resources not increasing, growth of fish will be reduced. Decreased dissolved oxygen levels, due to high biological oxygen demand from the excessive vegetation, will also have negative impacts on the aquatic life. Wildlife populations will also be negatively impacted by these dense stands of vegetation. Birds and waterfowl will have difficulty finding quality plants for food or in locating prey within the dense plant stands.

Water quality could also be negatively impacted with the implementation of the no action option. Deposition of large amounts of organic matter and release of nutrients upon the death of the massive stands of vegetation is a probable outcome of the no action option. These dead plants will contribute to the sediment load of the lake and could accelerate its filling in. The large nutrient release when the plants die back in the fall could lead to lake-wide algae blooms and an overall increase of the internal nutrient load. In addition, the decomposition of the massive amounts of vegetation will lead to a depletion of the lakes dissolved oxygen. This can cause fish stress, and eventually, if the stress is frequent or severe enough, fish kills. All of the impacts above could in turn have negative impacts on numerous aspects of the lake’s ecosystem.

In addition to the ecological impacts, many physical uses of the lake will be negatively impacted. Boating could be nearly impossible without becoming entangled in thick stands of plants. Swimming could also become increasingly difficult due to thick vegetation that would develop at beaches. Fishing could become more and more exasperating due in part to the thick vegetation and also because of the stunted fish population. In addition, the aesthetics of the lake will also decline due to large areas of the lake covered by tangled mats of vegetation and the odors that will develop when they decay. The combination of the above events could cause property values on the lake to suffer. Property values on lakes with weedy plant/algae problems have been shown to decrease by as much as 15-20%.

Costs
No cost will be incurred by implementing the no action management option. However, if in the future a management plan was initiated, costs might be significantly higher since a no action plan was originally followed.

Option 2: Aquatic Herbicides
Aquatic herbicides are the most common method to control nuisance vegetation/algae. When used properly, they can provide selective and reliable control. Products can not be licensed for use in aquatic situations unless there is less than a 1 in 1,000,000 chance of any negative effects on human health, wildlife, and the environment. Aquatic herbicides are not allowed to be environmentally persistent, bioaccumulate, or have any bioavailability. Prior to herbicide application, licensed applicators should evaluate the lake's vegetation and, along with the lake's management plan, choose the appropriate herbicide and treatment areas, and apply the herbicides during appropriate conditions (i.e., low wind speed, D.O. concentration, temperature).

There are two groups of herbicides: contact and systemic. Contact herbicides, like their name indicates, kill on contact. These herbicides affect only the above ground portion of the plant that they come into contact with and therefore do not kill the root system. An example of a contact herbicide is diquat. Systemic herbicides are taken up by the plant and disrupt cellular processes, which in turn cause plant death. These herbicides kill both the above ground portions of the plant as well as the root system. An example of a systemic herbicide is fluridone. Both types of herbicides are available in liquid or granular forms. Liquid forms are concentrated and need to be mixed into water to obtain the desired concentration. The solution is then sprayed on the water's surface or injected into the water in the treatment areas. Granular herbicides are broadcast in a known rate over the treatment area where they sink to the bottom. Some granular products slowly release the herbicide, which is then taken up by the plant. These are referred to as SRP formulations (Slow Release Pellet). Other granular herbicides come in crystal form and dissolve as they come in contact with water. This is typical of herbicides such as copper sulfate. Many herbicides come in both liquid and granular forms to fit the management needs of the lake. Herbicide applications can either be done as whole lake treatments or as more selective spot treatments. Multiple herbicides are often mixed and applied together. This is called a tank mix. This is done to save time, energy, and cost.

Aquatic herbicides are best used on actively growing plants to ensure optimal herbicide uptake. For this reason, herbicides are normally applied mid to late spring when water temperatures are above 60^0F. This is the time of year when the plants are most actively growing and before seed/vegetative propagule formation. Follow up applications should be done as needed. When choosing an aquatic herbicide it is important to know what plants are present, which ones are problematic, which plants are beneficial, and how a particular herbicide will act upon these plants. The herbicide label is very important and should always be read before use. There may be more than one herbicide for a given plant. As with other management options, proper usage is the key to their effectiveness, benefits, and disadvantages.

Aquatic herbicides are part of the annual maintenance plan of Old Oak Lake. Currently, treatments are targeting all of the plants in the lake, which when completed, leaves minimal habitat for fish and wildlife as well as allows for nutrients like phosphorus to be utilized by algae instead of aquatic plants. The numerous algae blooms in July, August, and September are the result of these plant treatments. In addition, removing large amounts of aquatic plants requires the use of more algicides. It is recommended that an aquatic plant management plan for Old Oak Lake be developed that will balance the desires of the homeowners (aesthetics) and the lake's overall ecological health. If herbicides are used, it is recommended that spot treatments be done on target plants that are becoming invasive (i.e., EWM, coontail and curlyleaf pondweed), while allowing beneficial native plants (i.e., American and sago pondweed), to grow in certain areas of the lake. The plant populations will provide habitat for fish and wildlife as well as compete with algae for nutrients. Water clarity should improve with the increase in plants and decrease in algae.

The current combination of diquat (Reward®) and endothall (Aquathol K®) is acceptable in areas where EWM, coontail, and curlyleaf pondweed are growing together. In areas where EWM and coontail are mixed with beneficial native plants like American or sago pondweed, then an herbicide application of 2,4-D would be recommended since this product kills dicots (broadleaf plants like EWM and coontail) and not monocots (grass-like plants like the pondweeds). However, 2,4-D products will not work on curlyleaf pondweed. Any treatments should occur earlier than the June 2003 date as to prevent the curlyleaf from forming its reproductive structures (called turions), which may help reduce the following years plant density. An earlier treatment will also prevent the EWM from spreading and outcompeting the native plants, since EWM begins growing earlier in spring than many of the native plants. However, an additional spot treatment may be needed later in the year to control coontail since this plant emerges later in the spring than EWM or curlyleaf pondweed.

Pros

When used properly, aquatic herbicides can be a powerful tool in management of excessive vegetation. Often, aquatic herbicide treatments can be more cost effective in the long run compared to other management techniques. A properly implemented plan can often provide season long control with minimal applications. Ecologically, herbicides can be a better management option than using mechanical harvesting or grass carp. When properly applied, aquatic herbicides may be selective for nuisance plants such as Eurasian water milfoil but allow desirable plants such as American pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*) to remain. This removes the problematic vegetation and allows native and more desirable plants to remain and flourish with minimal manipulation.

The fisheries and waterfowl populations of the lake would benefit greatly due to an increase in quality habitat and food supply. Dense stands of plants would be thinned out and improve spawning habitat and food source availability for fish. Waterfowl population would greatly benefit from increases in quality food sources, such as large-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton amplifolius*). Another environmental benefit of using aquatic herbicides over other management options is that they are organism specific. The metabolic pathways by which herbicides kill plants are plant specific which humans and other organisms do not carry out. Organisms such as fish, birds, mussels, and zooplankton are generally unaffected.

By implementing a good management plan with aquatic herbicides, usage opportunities of the lake would increase. Activities such as boating and swimming would improve due to the removal of dense stands of vegetation. The quality of fishing may improve because of improved habitat. In addition to increased usage opportunities, the overall aesthetics of the lake would improve, potentially increasing property values on the lake.

Cons

The most obvious drawback of using aquatic herbicides is the input of chemicals into the lake. Even though the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) approved these chemicals for use, human error can make them unsafe and bring about undesired outcomes. If not properly used, aquatic herbicides can remove too much vegetation from the lake. This could drastically alter biodiversity and ecological. Total or over-removal of plants can cause a variety of problems lake-wide. The fishery of the lake may decline and/or become stunted due to predation issues related to decreased water clarity. Other wildlife, such as waterfowl, which commonly forage on aquatic plants, would also be negatively impacted by the decrease in food supply.

Another problem associated with removing too much vegetation is the loss of sediment stabilization by plants, which can lead to increased turbidity and resuspension of nutrients. The increase in turbidity can cause a decrease in light penetration, which can further aggravate the aquatic plant community. The resuspension of nutrients will contribute to the overall nutrient load of the lake, which can lead to an increased frequency of noxious algal blooms. Furthermore, the removal of aquatic vegetation, which competes with algae for resources, can directly contribute to an increase in blooms.

After the initial removal, there is a possibility for regrowth of vegetation. Upon regrowth, weedy plants such as Eurasian water milfoil and coontail quickly reestablish, form dense stands, and prevent the growth of desirable species. This causes a decrease in plant biodiveristy. Additionally, these dense stands of nuisance vegetation can lead to an overpopulation of stunted fish due to a decrease in predation of forage species by predatory fish. This disruption in the fisheries can have negative impacts throughout the ecosystem from zooplankton to higher organisms such as waterfowl and other wildlife. Additionally, some herbicides have use restrictions regarding their use in relation to fish, swimming, irrigation, etc.

Over-removal, and possible regrowth of nuisance vegetation that may follow will drastically impair recreational use of the lake. Swimming could be adversely affected due to the likelihood of increased algal blooms. Swimmers may become entangled in large mats of filamentous algae. Blooms of planktonic species, such as blue-green algae, can produce harmful toxins as well produce noxious odors. If regrowth of nuisance vegetation were to occur, motors could become entangled making boating difficult. Fishing would also be negatively impacted due to the decreased health of the lake's fishery. The overall appearance of the lake would also suffer due to an increase in unsightly algal blooms and massive stands of vegetation. This in turn could have an unwanted effect on property values. Studies have shown that problematic algal blooms can decrease property values by 15-20%.

Costs

To calculate total cost it will be necessary to calculate surface acreage (SA) or acre-feet (AF) of the area(s) to be treated according to each lake's aquatic plant management plan. Diquat (Reward®) costs approximately $425/SA and endothall (Aquathol K®) costs approximately $150-175/SA. The 2,4-D products (Aquacide®, Aqua-Kleen®, Navigate®, Weedar 64®) cost approximately $350-425/SA.

<u>Option 3: Hand Removal</u>

Hand removal of excessive aquatic vegetation is a commonly used management technique. Hand removal is normally used in small ponds/lakes and limited areas for selective vegetation removal. Areas surrounding piers and beaches are commonly targeted areas. Typically tools such as rakes and cutting bars are used to remove vegetation. These are easily obtainable through many outdoor supply catalogs or over the internet. Some rakes are equipped with tines as well as cutting edges. Tools can also be hand made by drilling a hole in the handle of a heavy-duty garden rake and tying it to a length of rope. Weights may be needed in order to provide forceful contact with the plants. In many instances, homeowners on lakes with near shore vegetation problems simply cut swaths through the weeds to create pathways to open water. Due to the limited amount of biomass removed, harvested plant material is often used as fertilizer and compost in gardens.

Pros

Hand removal is a quick, inexpensive, and selective way to remove nuisance vegetation. Hand removal is an activity in which all lake residents could participate. The work involved in removing plants can provide a rewarding sense of accomplishment. By removing excess vegetation, use of beaches and piers would be improved. Many of the improved water quality benefits of a well-executed herbicide program or harvesting program are also shared by hand removal. Wildlife habitat, such as fish spawning beds, could be greatly improved. This in turn would benefit other portions of the lake's ecosystem.

Cons

There are few negative attributes to hand removal. One negative implication is labor. Depending on the extent of infestation, removal of large amount, of vegetation can be quite tiresome. Another drawback can be disposal. Finding a site for numerous residents to dispose of large quantities of harvested vegetation can sometimes be problematic. However, individual homeowners would be removing limited quantities of plant material so there would not be much to dispose of. Another drawback is possible nonselective removal by hand harvesting. By throwing a rake blindly into the depths, it is impossible to determine what plants are removed and which ones are not until the rake is pulled up. Even in shallow depths, untrained persons might mistakenly remove desirable vegetation and/or disrupt valuable habitat (fish spawning beds). Over removal could also be a problem but is not normally a concern with hand removal.

Costs

Plant removal rakes can range in price from $50-150 and cutting tools commonly range in price from $50-200. Both are available from numerous catalogs and from the Internet. A homemade rake (heavy duty garden rake, rope, and weight) would cost about $20-40.

Option 4: Reestablishing Native Aquatic Vegetation

This option is identical to Option 4 in **Objective III: Nuisance Algae Management Options.**

Objective V: Eliminate or Control Exotic Species

Numerous exotic plant species have been introduced into our local ecosystems. Some of these plants are aggressive, quickly out-competing native vegetation and flourishing in an environment where few natural predators exist. Plants such as purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), and reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) are three examples. The outcome is a loss of plant and animal diversity. This section will address terrestrial shoreline exotic species.

Purple loosestrife is responsible for the “sea of purple” seen along roadsides and in wetlands during summer. It can quickly dominate a wetland or shoreline. Due in part to an extensive root system, large seed production (estimates range from 100,000 to 2.7 million seeds per plant), and high seed germination rate, purple loosestrife spreads quickly. Buckthorn is an aggressive shrub species that grows along lake shorelines as well as most upland habitats. It shades out other plants, its roots exude a chemical that discourages other plant growth, and it is quick to become established on disturbed soils. Reed canary grass is an aggressive plant species that was introduced as a shoreline stabilizer. It is found on lakeshores, stream banks, marshes and exposed moist ground. Although it does serve to stabilize shorelines to some extent, it has low food value and does not provide winter habitat for wildlife. It is very successful in taking over disturbed areas and, if left unchecked, will dominate an area, particularly a wetland or shoreline, in a short period of time. Since it begins growing early in the spring, it quickly out-competes native vegetation that begins growth later in the year. Control of purple loosestrife, buckthorn, and reed canary grass are discussed below. However, these control measures can be similarly applied to other exotic species such as garlic mustard (*Allilaria officianalis*) or honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) as well as some aggressive native species, such as box elder (*Acer negundo*).

The presence of exotic species along a lakeshore is by no means a death sentence for the lake or other plant and animal life. If controlled, many exotic species can perform many of the original functions that they were brought here for. For example, reed canary grass was imported for its erosion control properties. It still contributes to this objective (offering better erosion control than commercial turfgrass), but needs to be isolated and kept in control. Many exotics are the result of garden or ornamental plants escaping into the wild. One isolated plant along a shoreline will probably not create a problem by itself, but its removal early on is best. Problems arise when plants are left to spread, many times to the point where treatment is difficult or cost prohibitive. A monitoring program should be established, problem areas identified, and control measures taken when appropriate. This is particularly important in remote areas of lake shorelines where the spread of exotic species may go unnoticed for some time.

Option 1: No Action

No control will likely result in the expansion of the exotic species and the decline of native species. This option is not recommended if possible.

Pros

There are few advantages with this option. Some of the reasons exotics were brought into this country are no longer used or have limited use. However, in some cases having an exotic species growing along a shoreline may actually be preferable if the alternative plant is commercial turfgrass. Since turfgrass has shallow roots and is prone to erosion along shorelines, exotics like reed canary grass or common reed (*Phragmites australis*) will control erosion more effectively. Native plants should take precedent over exotics whenever possible. A table in Appendix A lists several native plants that can be planted along shorelines.

Cons

Native plant and wildlife diversity will be lost as stands of exotic species expand. Exotic species are not under the same stresses (particularly diseases and predators) as native plants and thus can out-compete the natives for nutrients, space, and light. Few wildlife species use areas where exotic plants dominate. This happens because many wildlife species either have not adapted with the plants and do not view them as a food resource, the plants are not digestible to the animal, or their primary food supply (i.e., insects) are not attracted to the plants. The result is a monoculture of exotic plants with limited biodiversity.

Recreational activities, especially wildlife viewing, may be hampered by such monocultures. Access to lake shorelines may be impaired due to dense stands of non-native plants. Other recreational activities, such as swimming and boating, may not be affected.

Costs

Costs with this option are zeroing initially, however, when control is eventually needed, costs will be substantially more than if action was taken immediately. Additionally, the eventual loss of ecological diversity is difficult to calculate financially.

Option 2: Biological Control

Biological control (bio-control) is a means of using natural relationships already in place to limit, stop, or reverse an exotic species' expansion. In most cases, insects that prey upon the exotic plants in its native ecosystem are imported. Since there is a danger of bringing another exotic species into the ecosystem, state and federal agencies require testing before any bio-control species are released or made available for purchase.

Recently two leaf beetles (*Galerucella pusilla* and *G. calmariensis*) and two weevils, one a root-feeder (*Hylobius transversovittatus*) and one a flower-feeder (*Nanophyes marmoratus*) have offered some hope to control purple loosestrife by natural means. These insects feed on the leaves, roots, or flowers of purple loosestrife, eventually weakening and killing the plant or, in the case of the flower-feeder, prevent seeding. In large stands of loosestrife, the beetles and weevils naturally reproduce and in many locations, significantly reduce plant densities. The insects are host specific, meaning that they will attack no other plant but purple loosestrife. Currently, the beetles have proven to be most effective and are available for purchase. There are no designated stocking rate recommendations, since using bio-control insects are seen as an inoculation and it may take 3-5 years for beetle populations to increase to levels that will cause significant damage. Depending on the size of the infested area, it may take 1,000 or more adult beetles per acre to cause significant damage.

Pros

Control of exotics by a natural mechanism is preferable to chemical treatments. Insects, being part of the same ecological system as the exotic plant (i.e., the beetles and weevils and the purple loosestrife) are more likely to provide long-term control. Chemical treatments are usually non-selective while bio-control measures target specific plant species. This technique is beneficial to the ecosystem since it preserves, even promotes, biodiversity. As the exotic plant dies back, native vegetation can reestablish the area.

Cons

Few exotics can be controlled using biological means. Currently, there are no bio-control techniques for plants such as buckthorn, reed canary grass, or a host of other exotics. One of the major disadvantages of using bio-control is the costs and labor associated with it.

Use of biological mechanisms to control plants such as purple loosestrife is still under debate. Similar to purple loosestrife, the beetles and weevils that control it are not native to North America. Due to the poor historical record of introducing non-native species, even to control other non-native species, this technique has its critics.

Costs

The New York Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University (email: bb22@cornell.edu, 607-255-5314, or visit the website: www.invasiveplants.net) sells overwintering adult leaf beetles (which will lay eggs the year of release) for $1 per beetle and new generation leaf beetles (which will lay eggs beginning the following year) at $0.25 per beetle. The root beetles are sold for $5 per beetle. Some beetles may be available for free by contacting the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS; 217-333-6846). The INHS also conducts a workshop each spring at Volo Bog for individuals and groups interested in learning how to rear their own beetles.

Option 3: Control by Hand

Controlling exotic plants by hand removal is most effective on small areas (< 1 acre) and if done prior to heavy infestation. Some exotics, such as purple loosestrife and reed canary grass, can be controlled to some degree by digging, cutting, or mowing if done early and often during the year. Digging may be required to ensure the entire root mass is removed. Spring or summer is the best time to cut or mow, since late summer and fall is when many of the plant seeds disperse. Proper disposal of excavated plants is important since seeds may persist and germinate even after several years. Once exotic plants are removed, the disturbed ground should be planted with native vegetation and closely monitored since regrowth is common. Many exotic species, such as purple loosestrife, buckthorn, and garlic mustard are proficient at colonizing disturbed sites.

Pros

Removal of exotics by hand eliminates the need for chemical treatments. Costs are low if stands of plants are not too large already. Once removed, control is simple with yearly maintenance. Control or elimination of exotics preserves the ecosystem's biodiversity. This will have positive impacts on plant and wildlife presence as well as some recreational activities.

Cons

This option may be labor intensive or prohibitive if the exotic plant is already well established. Costs may be high if large numbers of people are needed to remove plants. Soil disturbance may introduce additional problems such as providing a seedbed for other non-native plants that quickly establish disturbed sites, or cause soil-laden run-off to flow into nearby lakes or streams. In addition, a well-established stand of an exotic like purple loosestrife or reed canary grass may require several years of intense removal to control or eliminate.

Costs

Cost for this option is primarily in tools, labor, and proper plant disposal.

Option 4: Herbicide Treatment

Chemical treatments can be effective at controlling exotic plant species. However, chemical treatment works best on individual plants or small areas already infested with the plant. In some areas where individual spot treatments are prohibitive or impractical (i.e., large expanses of a wetland or woodland), chemical treatments may not be an option because in order to chemically treat the area, a broadcast application would be needed. Because many of the herbicides are not selective, meaning they kill all plants they contact, this may be unacceptable if native plants are found in the proposed treatment area.

Herbicides are commonly used to control nuisance shoreline vegetation such as buckthorn and purple loosestrife. Herbicides are applied to green foliage or cut stems. Products are applied by either spraying or wicking (wiping) solution on plant surfaces. Spraying is used when large patches of undesirable vegetation are targeted. Herbicides are sprayed on growing foliage using a hand-held or backpack sprayer. Wicking is used when selected plants are to be removed from a group of plants. The herbicide solution is wiped on foliage, bark, or cut stems using an herbicide-soaked device. Trees are normally treated by cutting off a ring of bark around the trunk (called girdling). Herbicides are applied onto the ring at high concentrations. Other devices inject the herbicide through the bark. It is best to apply herbicides when plants are actively growing, such as in the late spring/early summer, but before formation of seed heads. Herbicides are often used in conjunction with other methods, such as cutting or mowing, to achieve the best results.

Proper use of these products is critical to their success. Always read and follow label directions.

Pros

Herbicides provide a fast and effective way to control or eliminate nuisance vegetation. Unlike other control methods, herbicides kill the root of the plant, which prevents regrowth. If applied properly, herbicides can be selective. This allows for removal of selected plants within a mix of desirable and undesirable plants.

Cons

Since most herbicides are non-selective, they are not suitable for broadcast application. Thus, chemical treatment of large stands of exotic species may not be practical. Native species are likely to be killed inadvertently and replaced by other non-native species. Off target injury/death may result from the improper use of herbicides. If herbicides are applied in windy conditions, chemicals may drift onto desirable vegetation. Care must also be taken when wicking herbicides as not to drip on to non-targeted vegetation such as native grasses and wildflowers. Another drawback to herbicide use relates to their ecological soundness and the public perception of them. Costs may also be prohibitive if plant stands are large. Depending on the device, cost of the application equipment can be high.

Costs

Two common herbicides, triclopyr (sold as Garlon ™) and glyphosate (sold as Rodeo®, Round-up™, Eagre™, or AquaPro™), are sold in 2.5 gallon jugs, and cost approximately $200 and $350, respectively. Only Rodeo® is approved for water use. A Hydrohatchet®, a hatchet that injects herbicide through the bark, is about $300.00. Another injecting device, E-Z Ject® is $450.00. Hand-held and backpack sprayers costs from $25-$45 and $80-150, respectively. Wicking devices are $30-40. A girdling tool costs about $150.

Objective VI: Enhance Wildlife Habitat Conditions

The key to increasing wildlife species in and around a lake can be summed up in one word: habitat. Wildlife need the same four things all living creatures need: food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young. Since each wildlife species has specific habitat requirements, which fulfill these four basic needs, providing a variety of habitats will increase the chance that wildlife species may use an area. Groups of wildlife are often associated with the types of habitats they use. For example, grassland habitats may attract wildlife such as northern harriers, bobolinks, meadowlarks, meadow voles, and leopard frogs. Marsh habitats may attract yellow-headed blackbirds and sora rails, while manicured residential lawns attract house sparrows and gray squirrels. Thus, in order to attract a variety of wildlife, a mix of habitats are needed. In most cases quality is more important than quantity (i.e., five 0.1-acre plots of different habitats may not attract as many wildlife species than one 0.5 acre of one habitat type).

It is important to understand that the natural world is constantly changing. Habitats change or naturally succeed to other types of habitats. For example, grasses may be succeeded by shrub or shade intolerant tree species (e.g., willows, locust, and cottonwood). The point at which one habitat changes to another is rarely clear, since these changes usually occur over long periods of time, except in the case of dramatic events such as fire or flood.

In all cases, the best wildlife habitats are ones consisting of native plants. Unfortunately, non-native plants dominate many of our lake shorelines. Many of them escaped from gardens and landscaped yards (i.e., purple loosestrife) while others were introduced at some point to solve a problem (i.e., reed canary grass for erosion control). Wildlife species prefer native plants for food, shelter, and raising their young. In fact, one study showed that plant and animal diversity was 500% higher along naturalized shorelines compared to shorelines with conventional lawns (University of Wisconsin – Extension, 1999).

Option 1: No Action

This option means that the current land use activities will continue. No additional techniques will be implemented. Allowing a field to go fallow or not mowing a manicured lawn would be considered an action.

Pros

Taking no action may maintain the current habitat conditions and wildlife species present, depending on environmental conditions and pending land use actions. If all things remain constant there will be little to no effect on lake water quality and other lake uses.

Cons

If environmental conditions change or substantial land use actions occur (i.e., development) wildlife use of the area may change. For example, if a new housing development with manicured lawns and roads is built next to an undeveloped property, there will probably be a change in wildlife present.

Conditions in the lake (i.e., siltation or nutrient loading) may also change the composition of aquatic plant and invertebrate communities and thus influence biodiversity. Siltation and nutrient loading will likely decrease water clarity, increase turbidity, increase algal growth (due to nutrient availability), and decrease habitat for fish and wildlife.

Costs
The financial cost of this option may be zero. However, due to continual loss of habitats many wildlife species have suffered drastic declines in recent years. The loss of habitat affects the overall health and biodiversity of the lake's ecosystems.

Option 2: Increase Habitat Cover
This option can be incorporated with Option 3 (see below). One of the best ways to increase habitat cover is to leave a minimum 25-foot buffer between the edge of the water and any mowed grass. Allow native plants to grow or plant native vegetation along shorelines, including emergent vegetation such as cattails, rushes, and bulrushes (see the table in Appendix A for costs and seeding rates). This will provide cover from predators and provide nesting structure for many wildlife species and their prey. It is important to control or eliminate non-native plants such as buckthorn, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, and reed canary grass, since these species outcompete native plants and provide little value for wildlife.

Occasionally high mowing (with the mower set at its highest setting) may have to be done for specific plants, particularly if the area is newly established, since competition from weedy and exotic species is highest in the first couple years. If mowing, do not mow the buffer strip until after July 15 of each year. This will allow nesting birds to complete their breeding cycle.

Brush piles make excellent wildlife habitat. They provide cover as well as food resources for many species. Brush piles are easy to create and will last for several years. They should be place at least 10 feet away from the shoreline to prevent any debris from washing into the lake.

Trees that have fallen on the ground or into the water are beneficial by harboring food and providing cover for many wildlife species. In a lake, fallen trees provide excellent cover for fish, basking sites for turtles, and perches for herons and egrets.

Increasing habitat cover should not be limited to the terrestrial environment. Native aquatic vegetation, particularly along the shoreline, can provide cover for fish and other wildlife.

Pros

Increased cover will lead to increased use by wildlife. Since cover is one of the most important elements required by most species, providing cover will increase the chances of wildlife using the shoreline. Once cover is established, wildlife usually have little problem finding food, since many of the same plants that provide cover also supply the food the wildlife eat, either directly (seeds, fruit, roots, or leaves) or indirectly (prey attracted to the plants).

Additional benefits of leaving a buffer include: stabilizing shorelines, reducing runoff which may lead to better water quality, and deterring nuisance Canada geese. Shorelines with erosion problems can benefit from a buffer zone because native plants have deeper root structures and hold the soil more effectively than conventional turfgrass. Buffers also absorb much of the wave energy that batters the shoreline. Water quality may be improved by the filtering of nutrients, sediment, and pollutants in run-off. This has a "domino effect" since less run-off flowing into a lake means less nutrient availability for nuisance algae, and less sediment means less turbidity, which leads to better water quality. All this is beneficial for fish and wildlife, such as sight-feeders like bass and herons, as well as people who use the lake for recreation. Finally, a buffer strip along the shoreline can serve as a deterrent to Canada geese from using a shoreline. Canada geese like flat, open areas with a wide field of vision. Ideal habitat for them are areas that have short grass up to the edge of the lake. If a buffer is allowed to grow tall, geese may choose to move elsewhere.

Cons

There are few disadvantages to this option. However, if vegetation is allowed to grow, lake access and visibility may be limited. If this occurs, a small path can be made to the shoreline. Composition and density of aquatic and shoreline vegetation are important. If vegetation consists of non-native species such as or Eurasian water milfoil or purple loosestrife, or in excess amounts, undesirable conditions may result. A shoreline with excess exotic plant growth may result in a poor fishery (exhibited by stunted fish) and poor recreation opportunities (i.e., boating, swimming, or wildlife viewing).

Costs

The cost of this option would be minimal. The purchase of native plants can vary depending upon species and quantity. Based upon 100 feet of shoreline, a 25-foot buffer planted with a native forb and grass seed mix would cost between $165-270 (2500 sq. ft. would require 2.5, 1000 sq. ft. seed mix packages at $66-108 per package). This does not include labor that would be needed to prepare the site for planting and follow-up maintenance. This cost can be reduced or minimized if native plants are allowed to grow. However, additional time and labor may be needed to insure other exotic species, such as buckthorn, reed canary grass, and purple loosestrife, do not become established.

Option 3: Increase Natural Food Supply

This can be accomplished in conjunction with Option 2. Habitats with a diversity of native plants will provide an ample food supply for wildlife. Food comes in a variety of forms, from seeds to leaves or roots to invertebrates that live on or are attracted to the plants. Plants found in the table in Appendix A should be planted or allowed to grow. In addition, encourage native aquatic vegetation, such as water lily (*Nuphar* spp. and *Nymphaea tuberosa*), sago pondweed (*Stuckenia pectinatus*), largeleaf pondweed (*Potamogeton amplifolius)*, and wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*) to grow. Aquatic plants such as these are particularly important to waterfowl in the spring and fall, as they replenish energy reserves lost during migration.

Providing a natural food source in and around a lake starts with good water quality. Water quality is important to all life forms in a lake. If there is good water quality, the fishery benefits and subsequently so does the wildlife (and people) who prey on the fish. Insect populations in the area, including beneficial predatory insects, such as dragonflies, thrive in lakes with good water quality.

Dead or dying plant material can be a source of food for wildlife. A dead standing or fallen tree will harbor good populations of insects for woodpeckers, while a pile of brush may provide insects for several species of songbirds such as warblers and flycatchers.

Supplying natural foods artificially (i.e., birdfeeders, nectar feeders, corn cobs, etc.) will attract wildlife and in most cases does not harm the animals. However, “people food” such as bread should be avoided. Care should be given to maintain clean feeders and birdbaths to minimize disease outbreaks.

Pros

Providing food for wildlife will increase the likelihood they will use the area. Providing wildlife with natural food sources has many benefits. Wildlife attracted to a lake can serve the lake and its residents well, since many wildlife species (i.e., many birds, bats, and other insects) are predators of nuisance insects such as mosquitoes, biting flies, and garden and yard pests (such as certain moths and beetles). Effective natural insect control eliminates the need for chemical treatments or use of electrical “bug zappers” that have limited effect on nuisance insects.

Migrating wildlife can be attracted with a natural food supply, primarily from seeds, but also from insects, aquatic plants or small fish. In fact, most migrating birds are dependent on food sources along their migration routes to replenish lost energy reserves. This may present an opportunity to view various species that would otherwise not be seen during the summer or winter.

Cons

Feeding wildlife can have adverse consequences if populations become dependent on hand-outs or populations of wildlife exceed healthy numbers. This frequently happens when people feed waterfowl like Canada geese or mallard ducks.

Feeding these waterfowl can lead to a domestication of these animals. As a result, these birds do not migrate and can contribute to numerous problems, such as excess feces, which is both a nuisance to property owners and a significant contribution to the lake's nutrient load. Waterfowl feces are particularly high in phosphorus. Since phosphorus is generally the limiting factor for nuisance algae growth in many lakes in the Midwest, the addition of large amounts of this nutrient from waterfowl may exacerbate a lake's excessive algae problem. In addition, high populations of birds in an area can increase the risk of disease for not only the resident birds, but also wild bird populations that visit the area.

Finally, tall plants along the shoreline may limit lake access or visibility for property owners. If this occurs, a path leading to the lake could be created or shorter plants may be used in the viewing area.

Costs

The costs of this option are minimal. The purchase of native plants and food and the time and labor required to plant and maintain would be the limit of the expense.

<u>Option 4: Increase Nest Availability</u>

Wildlife are attracted by habitats that serve as a place to raise their young. Habitats can vary from open grasslands to closed woodlands (similar to Options 2 and 3).

Standing dead or dying trees provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Birds such as swallows, woodpeckers, and some waterfowl need dead trees to nest in. Generally, a cavity created and used by a woodpecker (e.g., red-headed or downy woodpecker, or common flicker) in one year, will in subsequent years be used by species like tree swallows or chickadees. Over time, older cavities may be large enough for waterfowl, like wood ducks, or mammals (e.g., flying squirrels) to use. Standing dead trees are also favored habitat for nesting wading birds, such as great blue herons, night herons, and double-crested cormorants, which build stick nests on limbs. For these birds, dead trees in groups or clumps are preferred as most herons and cormorants are colonial nesters.

In addition to allowing dead and dying trees to remain, erecting bird boxes will increase nesting sites for many bird species. Box sizes should vary to accommodate various species. Swallows, bluebirds, and other cavity nesting birds can be attracted to the area using small artificial nest boxes. Larger boxes will attract species such as wood ducks, flickers, and owls. A colony of purple martins can be attracted with a purple martin house, which has multiple cavity holes, placed in an open area near water.

Bat houses are also recommended for any area close to water. Bats are voracious predators of insects and are naturally attracted to bodies of water. They can be enticed into roosting in the area by the placement of bat boxes. Boxes should be constructed of rough non-treated lumber and placed >10 feet high in a sunny location.

Pros

Providing places were wildlife can rear their young has many benefits. Watching wildlife raise their young can be an excellent educational tool for both young and old.

The presence of certain wildlife species can help in controlling nuisance insects like mosquitoes, biting flies, and garden and yard pests. This eliminates the need for chemical treatments or electric “bug zappers” for pest control.

Various wildlife species populations have dramatically declined in recent years. Since, the overall health of ecosystems depend, in part, on the role of many of these species, providing sites for wildlife to raise their young will benefit not only the animals themselves, but the entire lake ecosystem.

Cons

Providing sites for wildlife to raise their young have few disadvantages. Safety precautions should be taken with leaving dead and dying trees due to the potential of falling limbs. Safety is also important when around wildlife with young, since many animals are protective of their young. Most actions by adult animals are simply threats and are rarely carried out as attacks.

Parental wildlife may chase off other animals of its own species or even other species. This may limit the number of animals in the area for the duration of the breeding season.

Costs

The costs of leaving dead and dying trees are minimal. The costs of installing the bird and bat boxes vary. Bird boxes can range in price from $10-100.00. Purple martin houses can cost $50-150. Bat boxes range in price from $15-50.00. These prices do not include mounting poles or installation.

Option 5: Limit Disturbance

Since most species of wildlife are susceptible to human disturbance, any action to curtail disturbances will be beneficial. Limiting disturbance can include posting signs in areas of the lake where wildlife may live (e.g., nesting waterfowl), establish a “no wake” area, boat horsepower or speed limits, or establish restricted boating hours. These are examples of time and space zoning for lake usage. Enforcement and public education are needed if this option is to be successful. In some areas, off-duty law enforcement officers can be hired to patrol the lake.

Pros

Limiting disturbance will increase the chance that wildlife will use the lake, particularly for raising their young. Many wildlife species have suffered population declines due to loss of habitat and poor breeding success. This is due in part to their sensitivity to disturbance.

This option also can benefit the lake in other ways. Limited boat traffic may lead to less wave action to batter shorelines and cause erosion, which results in suspension of nutrients and sediment in the water column. Less nutrients and sediment in the water column may improve water quality by increasing water clarity and limiting nutrient availability for excessive plant or algae growth.

Recreation activities such as canoeing and paddleboating may be enhanced by the limited disturbance.

Cons
One of the strongest oppositions to this option would probably be from the powerboat users and water skiers. However, this problem may be solved if a significant portion of the daylight hours and the use of the middle part of the lake (assuming the lake is deep enough) are allowed for powerboating. For example, powerboating could be allowed between 9 AM and 6 PM within the boundaries established by “no wake” restricted area buoys.

Costs
The costs of this option include the purchase and placement of signs and public educational materials as well as enforcement. Off-duty law enforcement officers usually charge $25/hour to enforce boating laws or local ordinances.