

WHAT'S THE WORD ON *Watermilfoil?*

Native watermilfoils, such as northern and variable-leaf, are integral components of natural plant communities in our lakes and streams. However, an invasive type, called Eurasian watermilfoil, has gradually gained a strong foothold in the Northern Lower Peninsula. After invading the Great Lakes, Eurasian watermilfoil steadily spread to our inland lakes and is now found in Burt, Charlevoix, Long, Mullett, Paradise, Six Mile, Skegemog, St. Clair, Thumb, Walloon, Wildwood, and Torch Lakes.

Thankfully, area lake associations have not been passive about this invader. Native aquatic weevils, which eat the exotic watermilfoil from the inside out, have been stocked in Burt, Long, Mullett, Paradise, Six Mile, Thumb, and Walloon Lakes. Benthic mats have been staked to the bottom of Thumb, Walloon, and Torch Lakes to control small infestations. Laminar flow aeration and bioaugmentation, which biodegrades the organic sediments and reduces the exotic watermilfoil growth, is currently being used in Paradise and Wildwood Lakes. Herbicides have been used in Paradise, Six Mile, Walloon, Wildwood, and Torch. And removal by hand has occurred, at least, in Torch Lake.

Although none of these approaches, or combinations thereof, have eradicated the invasive watermilfoil, they have made great strides in bringing it under control. Their efforts help preserve the natural ecosystems and recreational opportunities on our lakes.



ABOVE:
Diver installing
benthic mats



RIGHT:
Milfoil Weevils

Photo courtesy of Lycott Environmental



Each boat launch on Thumb Lake features a sign to alert boaters to the presence of Eurasian watermilfoil and how to prevent spreading it to other lakes.