

## ***An Apple River Protection and Rehabilitation Newsletter Summer 2011***

### **Hi Everyone!**

The Apple River flowage summer 2011 season has arrived! This is a very significant summer regarding the future of the flowage. After many years of trying to manage the aquatic plant population, we are faced with a massive plant challenge. In 1985 and 1986 and then from 1992-1997(8 years) a private custom harvester was used for a short period each of those years. Then from 1993-2009(17 years) herbicides were used to keep some portion of the navigation channels open as well as private channels were used by some owners. The results seem to be somewhat mixed. **The real ‘bomb’ came when the DNR made it very clear there would be no more treatment permits given without an approved aquatic plant management plan.** That order is still holding for 2011 even though we now have a “draft” management plan developed. It should be noted that the last plan was a “Feasibility Study” completed in 1978. It appears we operated on “borrowed” time for many years. However, the ARPRD board moved last year and launched the first step of conducting a “Warm Water Plant Intercept Macrophyte Survey “ of the flowage. That was required before developing an Aquatic Plant Management Plan. The survey was conducted on July 10-12 in 2010 and a report was prepared. The survey was conducted by the “Endangered Resources Services”. The report was based on 671 points in the 640 acre flowage and revealed thick muck in 95.8% of the bottom, and plant growth on 87.6 % of the lake bottom.

### **What did the plant survey find?**

There were 36 species found. Coon-tail, small duckweed, common water-meal and large duckweed were the most common native species in the lake. Of real concern is the invasive species population. The latest report shows Curly-leaf pondweed is now widespread and is in 344 acres (13 beds). It is extensiveness covering the entire flowage. This has happened even with 17 years of herbicide use. Eurasian water-milfoil has not been found.

From what we have all seen and has been supported by the survey data, we have a “growing” problem. It appears we are losing the management ability each year. Just a reminder, the flowage is a 639 acre lake (body of water) with a depth of 15’ and an average depth of 6’. The water entering the flowage comes from a 111,943 acre watershed called the Upper Apple River Watershed. Further, a high phosphorus level also causes a concern for many areas downstream as well as for us. It is evident that growing plants use nutrients. However, when they die and are not removed, they also release the nutrients and add to the muck as they decay. It seems the only way to address the real issue is the careful removal of excessive plant materials..

### **What has happened in 2011?**

An Aquatic Plant Management Plan for the Apple River Flowage has been developed and a draft copy is available for your review at the Amery Library as well as at the ARPRD website which can be found at <http://arprd.org>. The plan is in the draft stage and is open for your review from now until the Annual meeting on August 27<sup>th</sup>. Please watch the Amery Free Press for notices of coming events. The plan was developed by an advisory team that included 14 residents/owners as well as representatives of the City of Amery, the Town of Lincoln and the Polk County DNR, the Wisconsin DNR, the Apple River Association, and the St. Croix Tribal Environmental District.

The process of developing the plan was lead by Cheryl Clemens of Harmony Environmental in Amery. The committee met 5 times starting in Feb. and ending in mid-May. The report provides an extensive overview of all the background regarding plant populations, and key issues. The plan is developed around five major goals. The goals are 1. Improve water quality on the Apple River Flowage and downstream on the Apple River, 2.Prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species, 3.Maintain navigation for fishing, boating and access to lake residences, 4. Maintain native aquatic plant functions and 5. Minimize environmental impacts of aquatic plant management. The advisory committee engaged in extensive discussion as to how to best make the flowage more than a growing body of plants that hinder nearly every use.

**What does the plan recommend?**

The purchase of an 8' weed harvester which will function 4-5 days/ week from mid-May until September of each year. This will allow the removal of invasive species reproduction as well as the removal of native species that serve to clog all boats and water craft. The removal of plant materials in a 50' width along the entire navigation channel will make a difference. Many surrounding lakes are now using harvesters and are showing effective results.

**What will be the cost of this method?**

The cost of an 8' harvester, a shoreline conveyor and a trailer is about \$130,000. It appears the cost of operating a harvester, employing 2 people to operate, purchase fuel, repairs when breakdowns occur and other costs may be about \$20,000.which is within our current budget of \$22,000 per year.

**How may we pay for the equipment?**

We are preparing a payment plan which hopefully is not placing a financial burden on anyone. First, we will be seeking grants which are available for the purchase of harvesting equipment. If our request is successful, grants of up to 50% of the cost may be possible. Secondly, organizations have stepped up and offered \$5,000. Thirdly, we may seek a bank loan for the balance and develop a payoff over a five-year plan with a minimal increase in a tax levy. Currently, our current ax levy is about .63 mills which provides \$22,000/ year. A property valued at \$100,000 currently pays \$63 per year to the ARPRD. If the levy was increased to about 1.1 mills would provide the ARPRD with about \$38,000 or sufficient funds to make a \$14,000 payment each year or a payoff within 5 years and still have enough operating funds as well as other costs to implement the APM plan.. A current property valued at \$100,000 would have a levy of about \$110.00 per year. The question we need to ask is a \$47.00/ per year increase for 5 years worth making the flowage an attractive and useful recreational for Amery and the surrounding area or will the plants simply take control.

**What is the next step?**

All of you need to read the reports and provide your feedback over the next 2 months. Please send your questions and concerns to Cheryl Clemens at Harmony Environmental 516 Keller Ave. S. Amery or to committee or board members until the Annual meeting on August 27<sup>th</sup>. We need to be good stewards of the property that has been entrusted to us. The committee has tried to develop a plan that will meet the five goals and makes the flowage an asset for all of us rather than a body of water many want to avoid. Hopefully the plan makes sense and will receive approval from the Wisconsin DNR later this fall after you have approved the plan.

Thank you for your thoughts and input.

Sincerely, The ARPRD Board Roland Peterson Chr./Deb Lein Treasurer/Peg Pechacek Secretary

