

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2025

TO: MFA MEMBERSHIP

FROM: MFA LAKE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE,
Steve Johnson, MFA Board Member and Committee Chair

REGARDING: MILFOIL Q & A

Why is the EWM so thick this year?

The 2021/22 drawdown significantly reduced EWM in depths less than 5 ft, but it continued to thrive in the 5-to-6.5-foot depths. The EWM that remained quickly repopulated the shallower depths much faster than anticipated by the experts (primarily DNR lake biologists).

When was the last time the Minong Flowage was treated with herbicide (2-4-D).

About 15 acres were treated in the spring of 2023 in two locations, on the north side of the county park, and in the bay on the west side as one enters the channel to Pogo's. The county park application had a longer lasting effect than the bay by Pogo's.

Why didn't we do EWM control this year?

A grant application plus a two-year control plan was presented to the DNR last fall. (See website). The plan included the desire to treat with herbicide (2-4-D) about 40 acres of EWM beds, excluding Serenity Bay and the North Basin (east of Pogo's), two years of manual removal by divers of small beds in the southern half of the flowage, and using a water weed harvester to clear a navigation path on the south shore of Serenity Bay. Total expenditures for the two years were nearly \$130K of which The Minong Flowage Association would be required to cover \$30K of that cost through MFA cash, volunteer time, donated services etc. The DNR grant application review/award process is very structured and competitive. For the first time in our history of EWM management, The MFA did not receive a grant. As a result, the MFA did not have sufficient funds going into 2025 to implement any significant portion of the control plan and thus, no EWM control occurred, aside from property owner shoreline removal.

Why did the MFA not treat EWM with herbicides this year?

See above. In addition, while our grant request stated funds would be used for herbicide treatments, the DNR still requires an herbicide treatment permit application be submitted, and the issuance of that permit is independent of whether a grant is in existence or not. This spring, the DNR denied herbicide treatment applications to many lakes in the state, a few of which have now entered legal action against the DNR for that denial.

Are we going to do another drawdown?

Drawdowns remain a tool specified in our current 5-year Aquatic Plant Management plan. At the annual meeting in June of this year, the attending members voted to pursue another drawdown in the next three years. Officially, our APM plan states a drawdown can be considered when total acreage of EWM beds is 200 acres or more. See 2024 Bed Mapping study on MFA website for 2024 data. Executing a drawdown requires consent from both the towns of Wascott and Minong, Washburn County Highway Department, Zero6 Energy (dam operator), and the DNR (issuance of a

permit). Dissent exists in some members of both town boards, and the public (Cranberry Lake Flowage Association). The final grant application paperwork we will be submitting to the DNR includes request for financial support for a drawdown the winter of 2026/27, assuming we can get all the required approvals.

What is the MFA doing this year regarding the EWM situation?

- Private surveys of EWM beds by board members
- Committed out of the pocket expenses (\$7.5K) for a EWM bed mapping survey for 2025 which happened in August of 2025.
- Engaging the DNR in management strategies – a tour with DNR Lake Biologist, Ben Scheppenbach occurred on August 8th to discuss lake management including drawdowns versus herbicides versus manual removal, Great Lake Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission's continued opposition to use of herbicides, and staffing and personnel issues at the DNR, which has impacted grant processing recently.
- The MFA hopes to submit this fall a request for herbicide application permits for 2026, specifics to be determined by the 2025 bed mapping survey results. The purpose is to get early decisions from the DNR as to whether they will allow herbicide treatments on the Minong Flowage and if so where, what herbicide, etc.
- A first draft of a surface water control grant request updated with the 2025 bed mapping data and addressing areas where we might improve our chances of getting DNR funding assistance has been submitted to the DNR. It includes plans for herbicide treatments in areas that address navigational issues, EWM harvesting to address navigational issues, and a winter drawdown 2026/27.

Why can't we easily get herbicide application permits?

- The large wild rice fields, mostly east of Smith Bridge are a treasured resource to the native Americans in northern Wisconsin. Via their treaty rights, they have influence on DNR policy on many things, including the management of lakes where wild rice exists. The tribal organizations have taken a position of no herbicide use anywhere in the ceded territories, and especially on bodies of water that have wild rice. The DNR can overrule the tribal position, but it remains an inconsistent policy. The tribal position against herbicide treatment is regardless of whether the areas to be treated are downstream of areas of wild rice.
- The DNR has been edging more towards a policy of discouraging the use of proven herbicides in the state. Lakes that had not had difficulties in the past getting herbicide permits are now finding permits under more intense scrutiny.

If I donate to the MFA, how will my money be used?

Even in years where there is no active EWM control taking place there are annual expenses that approach \$10K for survey work, lake biologist consulting, grant and permit writing, and more. Managing invasives is a never-ending process and will always be an ongoing cost if the MFA continues to address lake management. Dollars donated for the purpose of "Lake Management" will be earmarked for lake management for activities, including but not limited to:

- Ongoing professional lake surveys used to establish control plans, and to assess the success of control activities.
- Consultant costs to assist in lake management plans, control plans and execution, and grant and permit applications.

- Herbicide treatments as allowed by the DNR and not covered by any existing grant funds. Costs of herbicide treatment typically from \$600 to \$900 per acre, depending upon the type of herbicide being used.
- Professional manual removal of EWM and other invasives (typically 4x to 5x the cost of herbicide).
- Winter drawdown costs which is mostly compensation for revenue loss from reduced power generation at the dam. This cost is variable, but for budgetary purposes is likely between \$30K and \$40K. There are other expenses such as surveys before and after.

Donated Lake Management Funds will be used to supplement and in conjunction with grant funds, if any.

So, there you have it. Managing the health of the Minong Flowage takes time and money. It is also a group effort. The Minong Flowage Association has two critical needs right now:

- Volunteers to assist in the creation, implementation and management of the Aquatic Management Plan. We are seeking immediate volunteers to:
 - serve on the Lake Management Committee to help write grants, and work with municipal authorities WDNR, Zero6 and other stakeholders to obtain plan approval, permits, track plan activities, etc.
 - help write and execute a communication plan,
 - help with fund-raising.
- Donations to fund all lake management expenses as described in this update.

The time for your help and support is now!

Please contact your Minong Association Board via the website to volunteer and to donate money.

We'll update you as the 2025 year draws to a close and as we look toward 2026 for planning