



Lake and Resources

This article is a follow up to last month's update on our Aquatic Plant Management Program, and the opportunity for members to attend an informational meeting on aquatic plant management and provide comment and discussion on our program. By doing this, it helps Management understand concerns members may or may not have regarding our current plan and management goals. Concluding the article will be a brief update on the results of the survey on the optional shoreline treatment program that was sent to the membership in January. This, too, was an opportunity for the membership to provide feedback on our current optional treatment program.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING:

Meeting attendees were represented from a variety of interest groups at the lake from recreational fishermen to tournament anglers as well as board members, staff, and shoreline homeowners. We opened the discussion to the attendees with an update on our current aquatic plant program and allowed an open roundtable discussion allowing members to provide comment regarding their support as well as concerns for the program. One point that was agreed upon was Lake Carroll has an EXCELLENT fishery! There was support for the current program providing a balance to both ecology as well as the needs of members for recreational usage. There were also concerns of members about maintaining our current fishery, and the need to reduce chemical usage whenever possible.

Our management plan is dynamic (able to change) based on current and changing parameters around the lake. For example, our water clarity is much less now that the zebra mussel population is getting 'under control'. This lower clarity reduces the depth at which plants can grow, and the fisherman are concerned about these deep-water plant beds diminishing.

Fishermen represented at the meeting requested we evaluate the harvesting program to ensure it is operating to the maximum benefit with minimal effects on the fishery. One concern was young of the year fish being harvested with the plants being cut and removed. Another was the removal of too many plants by harvesting them. Based on this discussion, I will work with our harvesting staff to educate them on these concerns to create awareness and develop protocols to minimize the impacts of the harvester. By creating awareness, they will be better equipped for decision making in the field while harvesting that will have benefits to both the membership as well as the fishery.

Another suggestion was to encourage lake front owners to utilize mechanical removal by hiring young people to rake plants from their dock and shoreline areas as opposed to utilizing the optional treatment programs. My opinion is that this would be an opportunity for landscapers to provide the service and determine if there is a market for this type of work at Lake Carroll. If it is a better option for lakefront owners, I'm sure it will work as a competitive business model for local businesses.

It was a great discussion, and the dialogue and exchange were beneficial to understanding the perspective of different members and different lake usage needs. Feedback is ALWAYS welcome, and communication is important. Feel free to reach out to our Management Team with any other comments.

SURVEY:

According to our marketing manager, we sent the survey to all Lake Carroll members with a total of over 2,400 members reached. Of the members sent the survey, we had an approximate 50% open rate, and 131 responded to the survey.

Of the 131 responding, we had 2 members responding twice so we compiled their response into one, giving a total of 129 responding. Lake front owners represented nearly 63% of the responses, while off-lake members represented the remaining. We received feedback from both on the lake members as well as off-lake members.

The following is a synopsis of responses by lakefront homeowners for the remaining questions asked:

- Did you utilize the optional treatment programs for aquatic plant control around your docks and lift?
 - o 53.8% said they used the program
 - o 46.2% did not utilize the program
- On a scale of 1 to 10 how satisfied were you with the results of the treatments after they were performed?
 - o The respondents averaged 6.5 on the satisfaction scale
- In 2019, we offered a third opportunity for treatment. Did you utilize all three treatments?
 - o 35.8% utilized the option
 - o 64.2% did not
- Were you satisfied with three opportunities throughout the season?
 - o 80.9% said yes, three options were sufficient
 - o Remaining 19.1% said no
- Our goal is to provide treatments before major holidays. Does the timing of these treatments fulfill your needs?
 - o 90.7% were satisfied with the timing
 - o 9.3% were not satisfied
- How satisfied are you with the way we send out notifications and enrollment requests prior to each treatment?
 - o The respondents averaged 7.3 on the satisfaction scale.
- Are you willing to provide an email address to us so we can provide you quick updates and information to make informed decisions on your treatment options?
 - o 89.3% said they were willing to provide emails
 - o Of those responding yes, 88.7% provided an email
 - o 10.7% were unwilling to provide emails
- There were 61 members providing comments on the program.

We grouped the comments into categories pertaining to this program.

- 15% of the comments were that this program should be funded by Association fees, not private homeowners (See below for explanation).
- 25% of the comments were about support and satisfaction for the current program.
- 5% of the comments were asking for all three treatments to be paid with one invoice (See below for explanation).
- 3% were complaints on the harvesting program and residual plants left during the cutting process. (See above for training programs for harvesting staff).
- 7% were concerns for the effect of chemicals on the environment and fish. (See below for explanation).
- 3% were comments that they want NO chemicals to be used at all.
- 8% were asking for updates on the performance of the treatments (See below for explanation).

COMMENTS *:

* Association should fund this program.

Many respondents felt this should be funded by the Association. The Association already funds our aquatic plant management programs to manage non-native species control through chemical use and harvesting operations for native species. We DO fund these programs. The **OPTIONAL** treatment program is a way for members that have lake front homes and need additional work around their docks where our harvesters are not able to cut. There are MANY members that actually want more aquatic plants for lake ecology and fishing. This program balances the needs of all members while working to maintain ecological balance of the lake.

* Requests to pay up front for all three treatments.

As your lake manager, I do not support this for the simple reason that if treatment is NOT NEEDED, we don't want you to do it. We don't want to use chemicals when they are not necessary. If there were an option to do all three and a 'blanket treatment', it would not be responsible to the ecology of the lake. Yes, it is more work for the membership to approve and send in 3 payments, but it is A LOT of work for myself and our office staff as well. The extra work is worth it to maintain the health of the lake with minimal chemical use. Also, by learning to accept some plants (not total eradication) we will, as a community, have a healthier lake. Some plant tolerance is needed.

* Environmental effects of chemicals on the environment, and fish.

The chemicals used are all approved for use by the EPA for aquatic plant control. We will work on a future article and educational programs to go more in depth to clarify this issue.

* Updates on the performance of these treatments.

This survey was an opportunity for our members to provide feedback on this service. We need more feedback from members to ensure this program is performing to the maximum benefit of the membership.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this service and are grateful for those that did respond so we are able to continue process and procedural development to make sure our member's needs are met to the best of our abilities, while providing the healthiest lake ecosystem we can. Please feel free to communicate with our team and we ask you to continue providing feedback through our surveys.