

Lake Missaukee Plant Control Program

Frequently Asked Questions

The Lake Missaukee plant control program has been ongoing since 2005. The program is administered by the Lake Missaukee Improvement Board under provisions of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (PA 451 of 1994). The program includes the select use of herbicides to control nuisance plant growth in Lake Missaukee. The objective of the plant control program is to control the spread of invasive exotic plants, while maintaining beneficial native plant species. Below are responses to some frequently asked questions about the project.

Who oversees the plant control program?

Plant control activities are coordinated under the direction of the lake board's environmental consultant, Progressive AE. Early in the growing season each year, biologists from Progressive conduct GPS-guided surveys of the lake to identify problem areas, and detailed treatment maps are provided to the plant control contractor. Follow-up surveys are conducted periodically throughout the growing season to evaluate treatment effectiveness and the need for additional treatments.

Who conducts the herbicide treatments?

The herbicide treatment contractor is PLM Lake and Land Management. The herbicide treatment contract is performance-based, the contractor is only compensated for work that is performed satisfactorily.

Who determines when and where treatments will occur?

Treatment timing is weather-dependent, and the scope of treatments depends on where nuisance plants are found during Progressive's surveys.

What plants are targeted for control?

The Lake Missaukee plant control program focuses primarily on invasive, exotic species. An exotic species is one that is found outside of its natural range, where exotic plants have no natural competitors or predators to help keep them in check. They can quickly outcompete native plants and gain dominance in the lake. Eurasian milfoil is the primary exotic species targeted for control in Lake Missaukee.

Why are there still plants in the lake following treatments?

The herbicides commonly used for Eurasian milfoil control are systemic herbicides that are selective for Eurasian milfoil. That is, they kill milfoil, but do not impact most other aquatic plants. These types of herbicides are slow-acting; once the herbicides are applied, it can take several weeks for the treated plants to die back. Remember, we do not want to remove all the plants in the lake. This would be bad for the fishery and cause a host of other problems such as algae blooms.

Is there a permanent fix to the problem?

If conditions are favorable, aquatic plants will grow. However, there are steps property owners can take to help minimize excessive plant growth in the lake such as limiting the use of lawn fertilizers and maintaining natural vegetation along the shoreline.

How about a pre-emptive strike?

To be effective, aquatic herbicides must be applied directly to the plant beds when the plants are actively growing. There are no pre-emergent herbicides like there are for agriculture.

Are herbicide treatments safe?

The aquatic herbicides that are permitted by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) are registered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. They also undergo toxicological review by the DEQ. In Michigan, aquatic herbicide use requires a DEQ permit. The permit lists herbicides approved for use in the lake, respective dose rates, and shows specific areas in the lake where treatments are allowed. If herbicides are applied according to label instructions and permit requirements, they should pose no danger to public health and the environment.

How do the treatments impact fish?

If applied properly, herbicides have no direct impacts on fish. In general, lakes with a variety of plants often support more productive fisheries. The plant control program in Lake Missaukee is designed to remove invasive plants while preserving plants that provide valuable habitat and cover for fish.

Why didn't my property get a treatment notice sign?

State regulations require that signs be posted within 100 feet of treatment areas. The signs list the herbicides applied and associated use restrictions. If there is no sign posted along your property, it means your area was not treated and there are no use restrictions. Which properties get treatment depends on where the plants are found during the surveys of the lake. Not every property gets treated every time.

When is it safe to swim after a treatment?

All herbicides have a 24-hour swimming restriction that will be posted on signs along areas of the shore that have been treated. However, if you do not have a sign posted or the sign indicates that only algaecides were applied, there are no swimming restrictions.

What about fishing restrictions?

There are no fishing restrictions associated with the treatment program.

When can I water my lawn following a treatment?

If you draw water from the lake for irrigation, be sure to read the sign posted along your shoreline at the time of treatment. Most irrigation restrictions do not apply to established lawns. However, if you water flowers or a garden, adhere to the irrigation restrictions posted on the sign.

What can I do to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Lake Missaukee?

If you trailer your boat to other lakes, be sure to thoroughly wash your boat, motor, and trailer before launching back into Lake Missaukee. With exotic species, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!