



Welcome to our Special Edition!

Normally, we try to keep our newsletters to 2 or 3 pages, but we thought that this was such an important topic that more detailed information should be distributed.

Invasive species *Phragmites australis*

By Stan Walker, KWEF Chair



As promised in our September 2020 Newsletter, here is some further information about the aggressively invasive, non-native species *Phragmites australis*, that has alarmingly established itself in and around the shores of Lake Bernard, in Sundridge.

On August 19th, I received an email from Marilee Koenderink of the [Phragmites Working Group, Lake Bernard](#), alerting us to the fact that *Phragmites australis*, an invasive non-native reed grass, has established itself in and around the shores of Lake Bernard. There is a concern that it may be on other lakes in the Almaguin area and if so, the stands need to be identified as soon as possible and removed quickly. Marilee invited me to attend one of their "removal events" to see what a well-established *Phragmites australis* stand looks like, and what is involved in removing the plants with saws and cane cutters. I was aware that the Eagle Lake Conservation Association had been involved in removing *Phragmites* from Eagle Lake near South River, but I was unaware of the situation on Lake Bernard.

I contacted Marilee, and my wife and I volunteered to attend the cut that the organization was doing at the Lake Bernard Dam bridge on High Rock Drive on August 28, to see what was involved in removing a stand.

The set-up and cutting volunteers arrived early and by 7:30 a.m. were hard at work cutting down the canes using a heavy-duty version of a gas-powered grass trimmer / brush cutter, with either a saw blade or hedge trimmer in place of the usual whirling plastic string. This stand was well established in a boggy muddy area on the shoreline. The water varied from ankle deep to holes that were waist deep, so hip or chest waders were essential. The dozen or so cleanup and transport volunteers all had arrived and were hard at work by 8:00 a.m. The reeds were piled on either sheets of plastic or children's plastic sleds that float, and hauled to shore where they were bundled and piled onto tarps for pick-up and disposal by the municipality. This removal process is hard strenuous work, especially with a well-established stand growing in thick gooey mud. This was the second year the group worked on this particular stand. They felt that the stand wasn't as thick or vigorous as the previous year, and hoped that repeated cutting and removal of the plants would continue to weaken the stand and stop the spread in this area.



The area in these pictures was cut and cleaned up in about 3 hours.



This invasive plant has no natural predators, produces a prodigious amount of seeds and also spreads by runners. From my conversation with Marilee, the stand we worked on in Lake Bernard near the dam was probably in existence for at least 10 years and will take several years to bring under control; it will be difficult to eradicate this stand completely. *Phragmites australis* can be removed completely if the stand is detected before it becomes well established. While herbicides can be an effective treatment, there are none currently licensed for use in water in Ontario.

There is an organization called the “*Invasive Phragmites Control Centre*” (IPCC), <https://www.phragcontrol.com/>, that prepared a report for the Lake Bernard Phragmites Working Group. I found it quite an interesting read; here is a link to that report: http://bit.ly/Lake_Bernard_IPCC_Report.

KWEF will be directly contacting our Lake Stewards and the Property Owners’ Associations in Kearney to ask that everyone survey their area for any possible stands. Based on the results of this survey, we may need to organize a group similar to the one in Lake Bernard to attack the problem. In Ontario, there are resources available that we can access to help with combatting this invasive plant.

In the meantime, we urge you to take a look around your property and surrounding properties for any possible stands of this invasive plant. For help in identifying this plant, here is a link to a Phragmites Fact Sheet: http://bit.ly/Phrag_Fact_Sheet. Also, here is a link to a Field Guide to Aquatic Invasive Species: http://bit.ly/FG_Aquatic. There are many native grasses that look quite similar.

If you do find a stand that you suspect is *Phragmites australis*, please note the nearest fire number street address or GPS co-ordinates and email the information to me at stan.kwef@gmail.com; please include your contact information. **If you take samples of the plant - especially the seed heads - keep them in a zip lock bag - and be careful that you do not introduce any part of the plant, including the seeds, to your property!** It is not a plant that you want to cultivate!

If you decide you want to remove it yourself, be careful that you do not make the situation worse by accidentally spreading it further.

This is a link to Best Management Practices for this plant: http://bit.ly/Phrag_BestPractices. Also, be sure to review the Ontario Phragmites Working Group website, <https://opwg.ca/>, and look under the Resources tab / Landowners for information about necessary permits and procedures: <https://opwg.ca/resources/for-landowners/>.



Fall is a good time to look for *Phragmites australis* as the seed heads are quite visible and distinctive. Please do not ignore this invasive plant in the hope that it will go away - it won't, and if ignored, the problem gets rapidly worse.

If you would like to see an existing stand of Invasive *Phragmites australis* in our area, we have located one in the ditch on the north side of Hwy 518 East in front of the B&G Variety in Emsdale. The stand extends eastward along Hwy 518 on both sides of the road in the area of James St. in Emsdale. I sent pictures to Marilee of the stand, and she confirmed that, in her opinion, it was Invasive *Phragmites australis*, after she stopped by in person to check it out. Since she is not a credentialed "species expert" she forwarded the pictures to Dr. Janice Gilbert at the Invasive Phragmites Control Center in Langton, ON who confirmed her identification. As you exit Hwy 11 north (Exit 244 - Emsdale), you will notice another stand on the east side of the north bound lanes in the ditch which closely resembles the stand in Emsdale mentioned above.

If this plant goes unchecked, it will cause property owners' shorelines to fill in and natural plants to disappear; the loss of biodiversity will cause additional stress to the natural ecosystem around the lake. We do not want this invasive plant in our watershed! Please report any sightings.



All the best to all of you from KWEF. Please remember to take good care of our lakes!