

Managing Aquatic “Weeds”

By Alyson Symon, Watershed Planner,
Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority



There is no doubt that the presence of aquatic plants (often referred to as weeds) in our Lake can impact our enjoyment of water activities, including swimming, boating, canoeing and kayaking. The Mississippi Lake Association (MLA) and the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) have received numerous inquiries over the years on this topic and if you’ve wondered how to deal with aquatic plants, this article might be of interest to you.

The MVCA does not directly regulate the removal of aquatic plants, but the organization does act as a point of contact for such inquiries, helping to provide information and direct property owners to the appropriate agency (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry [MNRF] or Ministry of Environment and Climate Change [MOECC]).

While at times more abundant than we would like, aquatic plants are an essential part of a healthy lake ecosystem. They provide food, shelter and oxygen to fish and other animals. They also consume and absorb dissolved nutrients (i.e. phosphorus) which can help to reduce algae growth.

Because of the benefits they provide, the applicable guidelines and regulations generally limit the removal of aquatic vegetation (weeds), but do recognize that some control may be needed when plant growth interferes with boating, swimming and other recreational activities. Limiting the size of the cleared area also minimizes the amount of long term maintenance work you will need to do while enjoying your time at the lake.

The options for aquatic plant removal generally fall under three categories:

1. Removal by Hand or Machine (i.e. rake, cutting bar)

This is regulated by Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) under the Public Lands Act and permit requirements are dependent on location and scope of the project.



For Mississippi Lake, because it is located south of Hwy 7, a permit is not required provided you follow specific rules about the size of the area that is cleared and how and when the work is done. (details on this approach are provided at the end of this article).

2. Barriers Such as Bottom Mats or Blankets

These are special mats/blankets that can be purchased and placed on the bottom of the lake to act as a barrier, preventing vegetation growth.

A permit is required from Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) for their use. Our district office is in Kemptville (613) 258-8204



3. Chemical Removal

This is an extreme approach usually saved for larger scale commercial needs where navigation is an issue. For this, a permit required from Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC).



The MNRF website has much more information on this topic (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/remove-native-aquatic-plants>) and a summary is provided below.

Note: On Mississippi Lake, because it is south of Highway 7, you are allowed to remove native aquatic vegetation without needing a permit if you follow these rules:

(if your property were located north of Highway 7, you need a permit)

There are also different provisions for the removal of invasive aquatic plants.

You:

- Are the waterfront property owner or conducting work on behalf of the property owner
- Only conduct work on shore lands directly in front of your property or your client's property
- Dispose of the plants you remove on dry land to prevent it from re-entering the water
- Use, operate or store any wheeled or tracked machinery/equipment on dry land, or on a barge or vessel
- Only use mechanical devices (for example, a rake, cutter bar) or your hands to remove plants and do not dredge the bed of the waterbody
- Do not clear an area exceeding the following dimensions

Frontage of property	Maximum removal dimensions		
	Width of main swimming/boating area	Length of main swimming/boating area	Width of boat channel
More than 22 m	15 m	30 m	6 m
Less than or equal to 22 m	8 m	30 m	6 m

- Clear the same area up to a maximum of the dimensions in the table above if you have cleared an area in the past under a work permit or these rules, or someone has done this work on your behalf
- Do not carry out work during fish spawning season or during the time of other critical life fish stages as set out in the In-water Work Timing Window Guidelines

**Note: On Mississippi Lake the in-water timing restriction runs from March 15th to June 30th.
In-water work cannot be carried out during this period.**

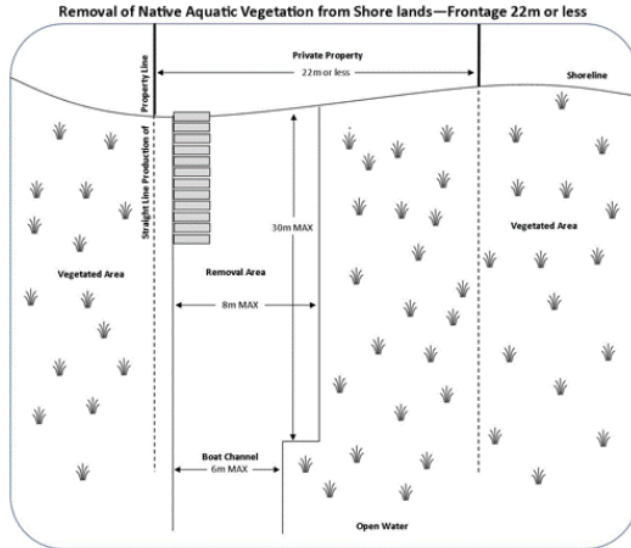
Waterfront Property Owners

You can only conduct work on shore lands directly in front of your property or where your property is fronted by a road allowance or shoreline reserve.

You may also want to discuss the project with neighbours before starting work.

Limits on Area Cleared

If the width of your waterfront is less than 22 metres, you cannot exceed the following dimensions when clearing the main area:



If the width of your waterfront is more than 22 metres, you cannot exceed the following dimensions when clearing the main area:

