Curly-Leaf Pondweed FAQ

Q: What is curly-leaf pondweed?

A: Curly-leaf pondweed is a non-native, invasive submersed aquatic plant that was first observed in Minnesota in about 1910.

Q: What does curly-leaf pondweed look like?

A: Curly-leaf pondweed leaves are somewhat stiff and crinkled, resembling lasagna noodles. They are approximately 1/2" wide and 2-3 inches long. The leaves are arranged alternately around the stem. They become denser at the end of branches.

Q: Why is curly-leaf pondweed in Fountain Lake?

A: Lack of snow coverage this winter, plus improved water quality in Fountain Lake, enabled the energy from the sun to penetrate deep into the lake much earlier than normal. This helped aquatic plants like curly-leaf pondweed grow and thrive for a longer period of time.

Q: What is the life cycle of curly-leaf pondweed?

A: Curly-leaf pondweed is one of the first aquatic plants to grow in a lake. This invasive species grows in dense mats and can choke out healthy, native aquatic plants, leading to a reduction in biodiversity. The plant tends to die down by the Fourth of July.

Q: How can the SRRWD suppress curly-leaf pondweed?

A: Herbicide: Most treatments of curly-leaf pondweed are done with endothall herbicide. Endothall comes in both liquid and granular forms. To selectively control curly-leaf pondweed, the goal is to have treatments done early in spring when water temperatures are between 50 and 60° F and are increasing. Contact herbicides act quickly and kill all plant cells that they come into contact with.

Mechanical: Mechanical control means to cut or pull by hand or with equipment such as rakes, cutting blades, and hand-operated or motorized trimmers. Mechanical control of large areas often uses floating, motorized harvesting machines that cut the plants and remove them from the water. Mechanical harvesting will not eradicate curly-leaf pondweed, but will re-establish from any remaining roots and seeds. Mechanical harvesters are not targeted or selective, meaning they cannot target only the invasive plants within the area harvested. Mechanical harvesting is more expensive than herbicide.

Q: Which management option will the SRRWD choose to suppress curly-leaf pondweed?

A: A liquid herbicide was chosen to suppress curly-leaf pondweed in Fountain Lake. The SRRWD has contracted with Solitude Lake Management for spray applications. A permit was acquired from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Q: How much of Fountain Lake will be treated?

A: The results of an aquatic invasive species survey indicate that approximately 60 areas will be treated.

Q: How will citizens know when the lake is being chemically treated?

A: "NOTICE" signs will be posted around the lake including all access points. Notices will also be posted via social media, SRRWD website, and radio.

Q: Can people or dogs swim in Fountain Lake after it is chemically treated?

A: This treatment yields quick results. Safety Data Sheets recommend humans and animals to stay out of the water for 24 hours after application. Liquid herbicide is not toxic to fish or waterfowl when used as directed. The most risk involved is to the applicator including eye and skin hazards. If on skin: Wash with plenty of soap and water. Call a poison control center or doctor if you feel unwell. Wash contaminated clothing before reuse. If inhaled, remove victim to fresh air and keep at rest in a position comfortable for breathing.

Q: What happens to the curly-leaf pondweed after it is treated?

A: Initial results can be seen in as little as 1 to 3 days. A full kill takes about 1 to 2 weeks. Curly-leaf pondweed will sink to the bottom of the lake and break down on its own. It is expected that the lake will need to be treated annually.

Q: What happens if curly-leaf pondweed is NOT controlled?

A: Curly-leaf pondweed can reduce oxygen levels, can hinder a waterbody's natural ability to regulate itself, and is associated with algal blooms. Likewise, native plants that serve as food and habitat for local wildlife can be threatened and destroyed.