

NUISANCE AQUATIC PLANTS



ISSUES

AND

OPTIONS

Seaway construction and excess nutrients have resulted in prolific plant growth in the St. Lawrence River area of concern, which hinders boating, fishing, swimming and other river recreation in late summer.

Dense aquatic plant beds often restrict boat access and are therefore a concern for shoreline landowners and commercial businesses dependent on the river's tourist traffic.

When aquatic plants break off or are cut by propellers, they form huge mats up to one metre thick which float to shore, block access to the river, and create bacteria and odour problems as they rot.

Excess algae (otherwise known as "scum") coats fishing nets and other surfaces and makes swimming unpleasant. Occasionally it causes taste problems in municipal water supplies.

Plant growth has increased because of changes in river flow brought about by Seaway and dam construction. In addition,

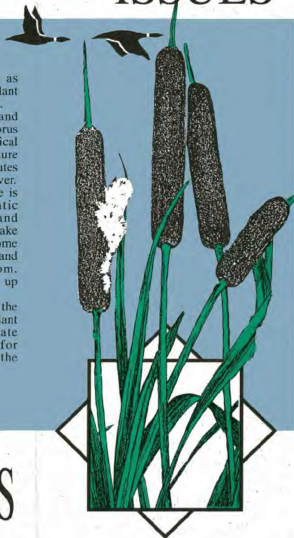
excess input of nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, which act as plant food, is stimulating aquatic plant growth.

Sewage treatment plants, factories and faulty septic systems all release phosphorus to the river. Agricultural runoff of chemical fertilizers and improperly handled manure and milkhouse wash water also contributes significant amounts of nutrients to the river.

Moderate growth of plants and algae is necessary for a healthy aquatic environment. Plants provide fish and wildlife with food and habitat and they take up contaminants such as mercury to some extent. Weed beds affect flow patterns and sediment settling on the river bottom. Altering weed beds could, in fact, stir up pollutants in the sediment.

The challenge, therefore, is to reduce the negative effects of excessive aquatic plant growth without upsetting the delicate balance of nature. Approaches for achieving this goal are discussed on the reverse side of this pamphlet.

ISSUES



Remedial Action Plan
Plan d'Assainissement

Corse et Ontario
Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection
Avec le soutien financier du gouvernement du Québec et du gouvernement fédéral

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OPTIONS

Many options are being considered to address the problems of excessive plant and algae growth described on the reverse side of this pamphlet.

One option for opening up boating access is to cut channels through the plant beds. This can be done by means of a government regulated plant harvesting program. Plant growth can also be discouraged by building structures to alter river flow patterns, but the environmental impacts of this activity would first need to be assessed.

Rotting plant masses that cause bacteria and odour problems can be removed, and a study could be done to find out why plants break off and form floating mats. If boat traffic is a contributing factor, speed limits can be lowered.

A number of options exist for reducing the amount of nutrients entering the river. For example, greater restrictions can be placed on discharges of phosphorus from sewage treatment plants, industries and faulty septic systems.

Public education programs can help to discourage use of the river for direct discharges from shoreline properties on Lake St. Francis.

Nutrient input from agricultural sources can be reduced by improved handling of chemical fertilizers, manure and milkhouse wash water in order to minimize nutrient runoff. Fencing livestock out of streams will also keep excess nutrients from entering the river and its tributaries.

Options for reducing phosphorus inputs from household cleaning products include launching a public education program to promote the use of phosphorus-free products or recommending that regulations be established prohibiting the sale of detergents that contain phosphates.

This pamphlet briefly summarizes the many issues and options being considered. To obtain more information, call the Cornwall RAP, Environment & Energy Ontario, 1-800-267-0974. We invite public comment at any of the openhouses or public meetings to be held in the Cornwall area.

Aquatic Plants

Aquatic plants provide necessary food and habitat for fish and wildlife. However, excessive plant growth hinders boating and other recreational pursuits.



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