

(DRAFT) Press Release

Invasive aquatic plant Eurasian watermilfoil remains scarce in Devil's Lake

Twenty years after the invasive aquatic plant Eurasian watermilfoil declined in Devil's Lake, recent surveys have demonstrated that the exotic plant remains scarce in the lake. These findings were part of a small-scale Lake Planning Grant Study sponsored by The Friends of Devil's Lake State Park.

The Eurasian watermilfoil decline in Devil's Lake appears to be more substantial and of longer duration than had occurred other lakes in the state. The plant is often cyclical and the initial invasion can be extensive. Declines often occur with resurgences of lower magnitudes. However, the continued suppression of Eurasian water milfoil in Devil's Lake likely reflects the relative pristine conditions and lack of disturbances such as shoreline development, motorboat traffic and large-scale aquatic plant maintenance activities such as herbicide treatments and mechanical harvesting.

Eurasian watermilfoil became established in Devil's Lake some time in the 1960s and reached nuisance levels by the late 1970s. Throughout the 1980s, massive beds of Eurasian watermilfoil had displaced native plants in the north, southeast and southwest shallow zones of the lake. The massive beds formed barrier reefs that caused substantial ecological and recreational use problems in the lake. By 1990, the large Eurasian watermilfoil beds had disappeared from the lake with continued declines in later years.

The decline in 1990 was not related to specific management but reflected natural ecological factors, possibly native weevils. The dearth of Eurasian watermilfoil in Devil's Lake is certainly good news for recreational uses and ecological stability. And with the ongoing removal of historical sources of phosphorus near the bottom of the lake (hypolimnetic pumping), the projected improved water quality will certainly benefit environmentally sensitive native aquatic plants that can compete with Eurasian watermilfoil.