

Deerskin Lake
Aquatic Plant Community Assessment
Vilas County, Wisconsin
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A. Aquatic Plant Survey Data

INTRODUCTION

Deerskin Lake is a 301 acre spring lake located in eastern Vilas County (Photo 1). The lake has a maximum depth of 18 feet, and is not known to hold any aquatic invasive species (AIS). Additionally, the Beaver Creek State Natural Area borders the lake's northern shoreline. A 2007 Aquatic Plant Management (APM) Plan found the lake to hold 15 aquatic plant species. Little Deerskin River is a Class I Trout Water with an Outstanding/Exceptional resource designation (NR 102), while Deerskin Lake itself is classified as an Area of Special Natural Resource Interest (ASNRI).



Photo 1. Deerskin Lake, Vilas County.

Knowing the threat AIS have imposed on numerous other area lakes, the Deerskin Lake Association (DSLAA) was proactive in protecting Deerskin Lake's aquatic plant community. This project aimed to assess and refresh the Deerskin Lake Aquatic Plant Management Plan while simultaneously having the lake examined by professionals for AIS.

The DSLAA has also participated in a grant funded Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) project in both 2013 and 2014.

AQUATIC PLANTS

Aquatic Plant Sampling Methodology and Data Analysis

Native aquatic plants are an important element in every healthy aquatic ecosystem, providing food and habitat to wildlife, improving water quality, and stabilizing bottom sediments (Photo 2). Because most aquatic plants are rooted in place and are unable to relocate in wake of environmental alterations, they are often the first community to indicate that changes may be occurring within the system. Aquatic plant communities can respond in variety of ways; there may be increases or declines in the occurrences of some species, or a complete loss. Or, certain growth forms, such as emergent and floating-leaf communities may disappear from certain areas of the waterbody. With periodic monitoring and proper analysis, these changes are relatively easy to detect and provide relevant information for making management decisions.



Photo 2. Native aquatic plants are an important component in maintaining a healthy aquatic ecosystem.

The point-intercept method as described Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Science Services, PUB-SS-1068 2010 (Hauxwell et al. 2010) was conducted in Deerskin Lake in 2007 by Northern Environmental Technologies Inc. and in 2015 by Onterra ecologists. Based upon guidance from the WDNR, a point spacing (resolution) of 60 meters was used resulting in 337 sampling points being evenly distributed across the lake (Map 1). At each point-intercept location within the *littoral zone*, information regarding the depth, substrate type (muck, sand, or rock), and the plant species sampled along with their relative abundance (Figure 1) on the sampling rake was recorded.

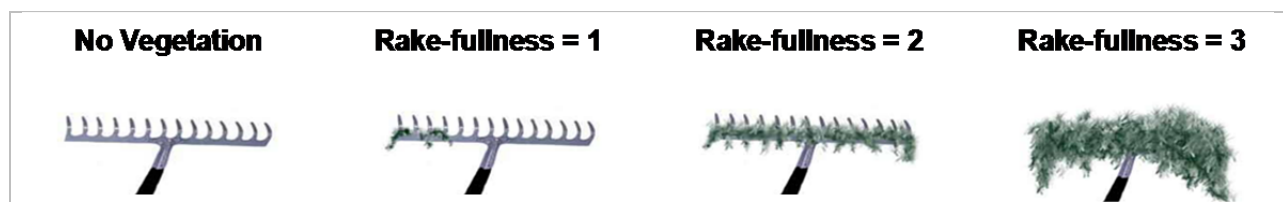


Figure 1. Aquatic plant rake fullness ratings. Adapted from Hauxwell et al (2010).

A pole-mounted rake was used to collect the plant samples, depth, and sediment information at point locations of 15 feet or less. A rake head tied to a rope (rope rake) was used at sites greater than 15 feet. Depth information was collected using graduated marks on the pole of the rake or using an onboard sonar unit at depths greater than 15 feet. Also, when a rope rake was used, information regarding substrate type was not collected due to the inability of the sampler to accurately feel the bottom with this sampling device. The point-intercept survey produces a great deal of information about a lake's aquatic vegetation and overall health. The 2007 and 2015 data are analyzed and compared and are presented in numerous ways; each is discussed in more detail the following section.

Primer on Data Analysis & Data Interpretation

Species List

The species list is simply a list of all of the species that were located during the 2007 and 2015 surveys on Deerskin Lake. The list also contains the growth-form of each plant found (e.g. submergent, emergent, etc.), its scientific name, common name, and its coefficient of conservatism. The latter is discussed in more detail below. Changes in this list over time, whether it is differences in total species present, gains and losses of individual species, or changes in growth forms that are present, can be an early indicator of changes in the ecosystem.

Frequency of Occurrence

Frequency of occurrence describes how often a certain species is found within a lake. Obviously, all of the plants cannot be counted in a lake, so samples are collected from pre-determined areas. In the case of the whole-lake point-intercept surveys conducted on Deerskin Lake in 2007 and 2015, plant samples were collected from plots laid out on a grid that covered

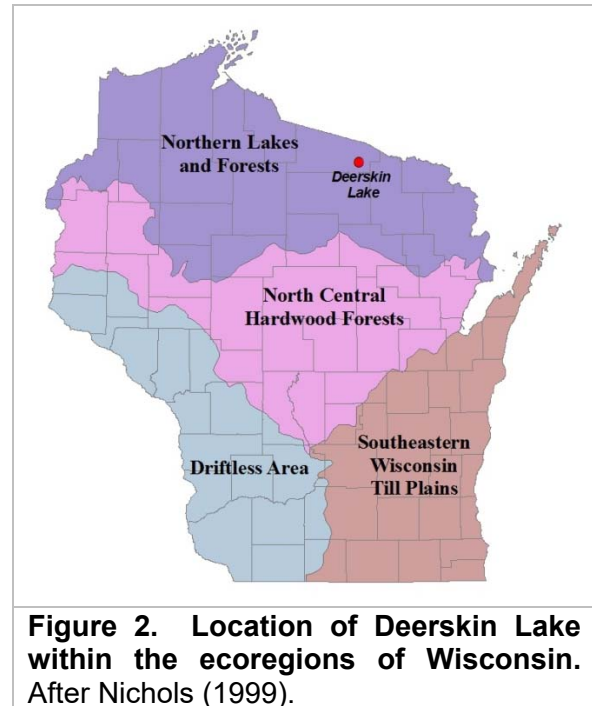
The **Littoral Zone (Photic Zone)** is the area of the lake where sunlight is able to penetrate and provide aquatic plants with sufficient light to carry out photosynthesis.

the lake. Using the data collected from these plots, an estimate of occurrence of each plant species can be determined. In this section, the occurrences of aquatic plant species are displayed as their *littoral frequency of occurrence*. Littoral frequency of occurrence is used to describe how often each species occurred in the plots that are equal to or less than the maximum depth of plant growth (littoral zone), and is displayed as a percentage.

Floristic Quality Assessment

The floristic quality of a lake is calculated using its native aquatic plant *species richness* and the average of their *conservatism values*. Species richness is simply the number of aquatic plant species that occur in the lake, and for this analysis, only native species are utilized. The average species conservatism utilizes the coefficient of conservatism values (C-value) for each of those species in its calculation. A species coefficient of conservatism value indicates that species' likelihood of being found in an undisturbed system. The values range from 1 to 10. Species that can tolerate environmental disturbance and are often found in disturbed systems have lower coefficients, while species that are less tolerant to environmental disturbance and are restricted to high quality systems have higher values. For example, coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), a submergent native aquatic plant species with a C-value of 3, has a higher tolerance to disturbed conditions and is often found thriving in lakes with higher nutrient levels and low water clarity. Other species, like algal-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton confervoides*) with a C-value of 10, are intolerant of environmental disturbance and require minimally disturbed, high quality environments to survive.

On their own, the species richness and average conservatism values for a lake are useful in assessing a lake's plant community; however, the best assessment of the lake's plant community health is determined when the two values are used to calculate the lake's floristic quality. The floristic quality is calculated using the species richness and average conservatism value of the aquatic plant species that were solely encountered on the lake during the point-intercept survey. Deerskin Lake falls within the Northern Lakes and Forests (NLFL) *ecoregion* (Figure 2), and the floristic quality of its aquatic plant community will be compared to other lakes within this *ecoregion* as well as the entire State of Wisconsin. *Ecoregions* are areas related by similar climate, physiography, hydrology, vegetation and wildlife potential. Comparing ecosystems within the same *ecoregion* is sounder than comparing systems within manmade boundaries such as counties, towns, or states. *Ecoregional* and state-wide medians were calculated from whole-lake point-intercept surveys conducted on 392 lakes throughout Wisconsin by Onterra and WDNR ecologists.



Species Diversity

Species diversity is probably the most misused term in ecology because it is often confused with species richness. As defined previously, species richness is simply the number of species found within a system or community. Although these values are related, they are far from the same because species diversity also takes into account how evenly the species are distributed within the system. For example, Lake A with 25 species may be no more diverse than Lake B with 10 species if the community of Lake A is highly dominated by one or two species and the community of Lake B has a more even distribution of species abundance.

An aquatic system with high species diversity is much more stable than a system with a low diversity. This is analogous to a diverse financial portfolio in that a diverse aquatic plant community can withstand environmental fluctuations much like a diverse portfolio can handle economic fluctuations. For example, a lake with a diverse plant community is much better suited to compete against exotic infestation than a lake with a lower diversity. Simpson's diversity index is used to determine this diversity in a lake ecosystem.

Simpson's diversity (1-D) is calculated as:

$$D = \sum (n/N)^2$$

where:

n = the total number of instances of a particular species

N = the total number of instances of all species and

D is a value between 0 and 1

If a lake has a diversity index value of 0.90, it means that if two plants were randomly sampled from the lake there is a 90% probability that the two individuals would be of a different species. Between 2005 and 2014, WDNR Science Services and Onterra conducted point-intercept surveys on 392 lakes within the state. The Simpson's Diversity Index values of the lakes within this dataset will be compared to Deerskin Lake.

Aquatic Plant Survey Results

On July 28, 2015, Onterra ecologists conducted the whole-lake point-intercept survey on Deerskin Lake. During these surveys, a total of 22 aquatic plant species were physically encountered on the rake (Table 1).

During the 2015 whole-lake point-intercept survey, information regarding substrate type was collected at locations sampled with a pole-mounted rake (less than 15 feet). These data indicate that 91% of the point-intercept locations less than 15 feet deep contained soft sediments, 9% contained sand, and none were found to contain rock (Figure 3). Like terrestrial plants, different aquatic plant species are adapted to grow in certain substrate types; some species are only found growing in soft substrates, others only in sandy areas, and some can be found growing in either. The combination of both soft sediments and areas of sand creates different habitat types for aquatic plants, and generally leads to a higher number of aquatic plant species within the lake.

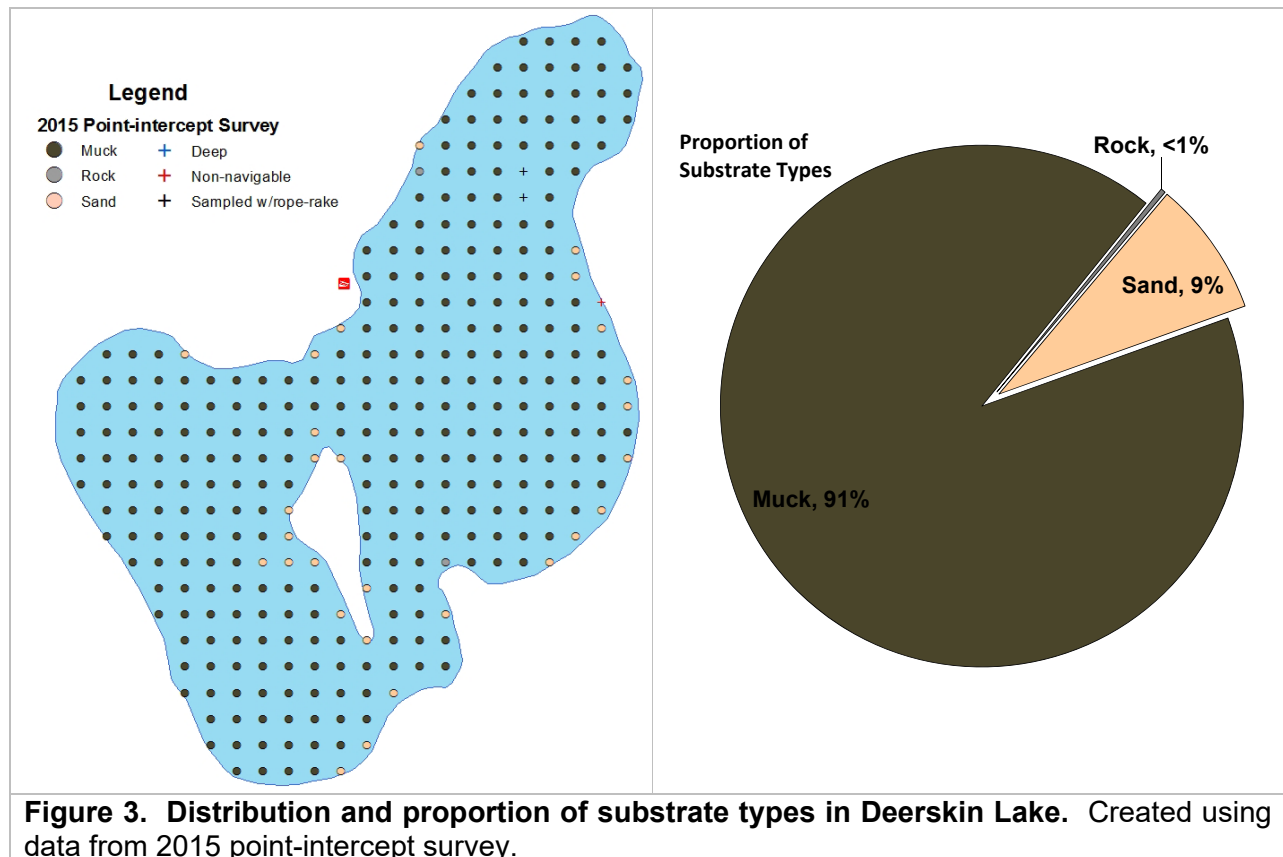


Table 1. Aquatic plant species located in Deerskin Lake during 2007 and 2015 surveys.

Growth Form	Scientific Name	Common Name	Coefficient of Conservatism (C)	2007 NET	2015 Onterra
E	<i>Eleocharis erythropoda</i>	Bald spikerush	3		I
	<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Creeping spikerush	6		I
	<i>Pontederia cordata</i>	Pickerelweed	9		I
	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	Common arrowhead	3		I
	<i>Scirpus cyperinus</i>	Wool grass	4		I
	<i>Schoenoplectus acutus</i>	Hardstem bulrush	5		X
FL	<i>Brasenia schreberi</i>	Watershield	7	X	X
	<i>Nuphar variegata</i>	Spatterdock	6		I
	<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>	White water lily	6	X	X
	<i>Persicaria amphibia</i>	Water smartweed	5		I
	<i>Sparganium angustifolium</i>	Narrow-leaf bur-reed	9		I
Submergent	<i>Chara spp.</i>	Muskgrasses	7	X	X
	<i>Elatine minima</i>	Waterwort	9		I
	<i>Elodea canadensis</i>	Common waterweed	3	X	
	<i>Eriocaulon aquaticum</i>	Pipewort	9		X
	<i>Griatiola aurea</i>	Golden pert	10		I
	<i>Isoetes spp.</i>	Quillwort spp.	8		X
	<i>Lobelia dortmanna</i>	Water lobelia	10		I
	<i>Myriophyllum alterniflorum</i>	Alternate-flowered water milfoil	10		X
	<i>Myriophyllum sibiricum</i>	Northern water milfoil	7		X
	<i>Myriophyllum tenellum</i>	Dwarf water milfoil	10	X	X
	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	Slender naiad	6	X	X
	<i>Najas guadalupensis</i>	Southern naiad	7		X
	<i>Potamogeton amplifolius</i>	Large-leaf pondweed	7	X	X
	<i>Potamogeton gramineus</i>	Variable-leaf pondweed	7	X	X
	<i>Potamogeton praelongus</i>	White-stem pondweed	8	X	X
	<i>Potamogeton pusillus</i>	Small pondweed	7		X
	<i>Potamogeton richardsonii</i>	Clasping-leaf pondweed	5	X	X
	<i>Potamogeton robbinsii</i>	Fern-leaf pondweed	8	X	X
	<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	Creeping spearwort	9		I
	<i>Utricularia resupinata</i>	Northeastern bladderwort	9	X	X
<i>Vallisneria americana</i>	Wild celery	6	X	X	
S/E	<i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>	Needle spikerush	5		X
	<i>Juncus pelocarpus</i>	Brown-fruited rush	8	X	X
	<i>Sagittaria cristata</i> & <i>S. graminea</i>	Crested & grass-leaved arrowhead	9	X	X

FL = Floating-leaf; FL/E = Floating-leaf and Emergent; S/E = Submergent and Emergent; FF = Free-floating
X = Located on rake during point-intercept survey, I = Incidental species (Data not collected in 2007)

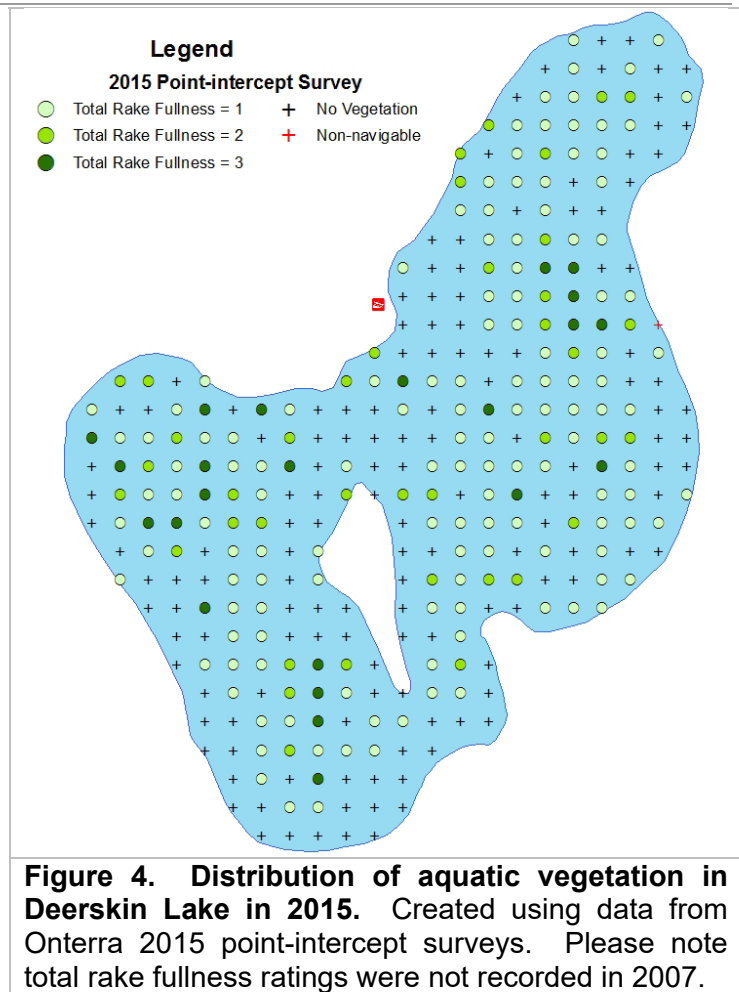
During the 2015 point-intercept survey, aquatic plants were found growing to a maximum depth of 15 feet, similar to the maximum depth of 14 feet recorded in 2007. Of the 333 point-intercept locations that fell within the maximum depth of plant growth, or within the littoral zone in 2015, approximately 58% contained aquatic vegetation. The frequency of vegetation was somewhat less than in 2007, which saw a littoral frequency of occurrence of 72%. Figure 4 displays the distribution of aquatic vegetation in Deerskin Lake as determined from the 2015 point-intercept survey. In 2015, of the 194 points with vegetation, approximately 68% of point-intercept locations contained aquatic vegetation with a rake fullness rating of 1, 20% contained a rake fullness rating of 2, and 12% contained a rake fullness rating of 3 (Figure 4). Total rake fullness data were not recorded during the 2007 point-intercept survey.

Of the 34 aquatic plant species encountered during 2015, 22 were physically encountered on the rake during the whole-lake point-intercept survey; the remaining 12 species were located incidentally. A species found incidentally in the lake, meaning they were present but not physically encountered on the rake are listed on Table 1 with an “I”. Of the 22 species encountered on the rake, southern naiad, fern-leaf pondweed, grass-leaved arrowhead and large-leaf pondweed were the four-most frequently encountered (Figure 5).

Southern naiad, the most frequently encountered aquatic plant in 2015, had a littoral frequency of occurrence of approximately 26% and was most abundant between eight and 12 feet of water in the lake. While closely related to slender naiad, southern naiad is often perennial and lacking fruit (Les et al. 2010).

Slender naiad is one of three native naiad species that can be found in Wisconsin. It is often found growing over areas of sand, and being an annual, it produces large numbers of seeds that are a valuable food source for wildlife. Southern naiad was not recorded in Deerskin Lake during the 2007 surveys, importantly it is believed that it was likely misidentified as slender naiad. These two species are morphologically similar, and distinguishing between them is often difficult in the field.

Emerging research is indicating that hybrids between southern naiad subspecies exist and are often observed growing aggressively and growing to nuisance levels in certain lakes. A genetic analysis is required to determine if the southern naiad in Deerskin Lake is the more aggressive subspecies hybrid. However, because this species was not observed creating nuisance conditions anywhere within Deerskin Lake, it is not a concern at this time. Southern naiad provides aquatic organisms with valuable structural habitat and sources of food. Additionally, it aids in maintaining the water quality of Deerskin Lake by stabilizing bottom sediments and utilizing nutrients that would otherwise be available to free-floating algae.



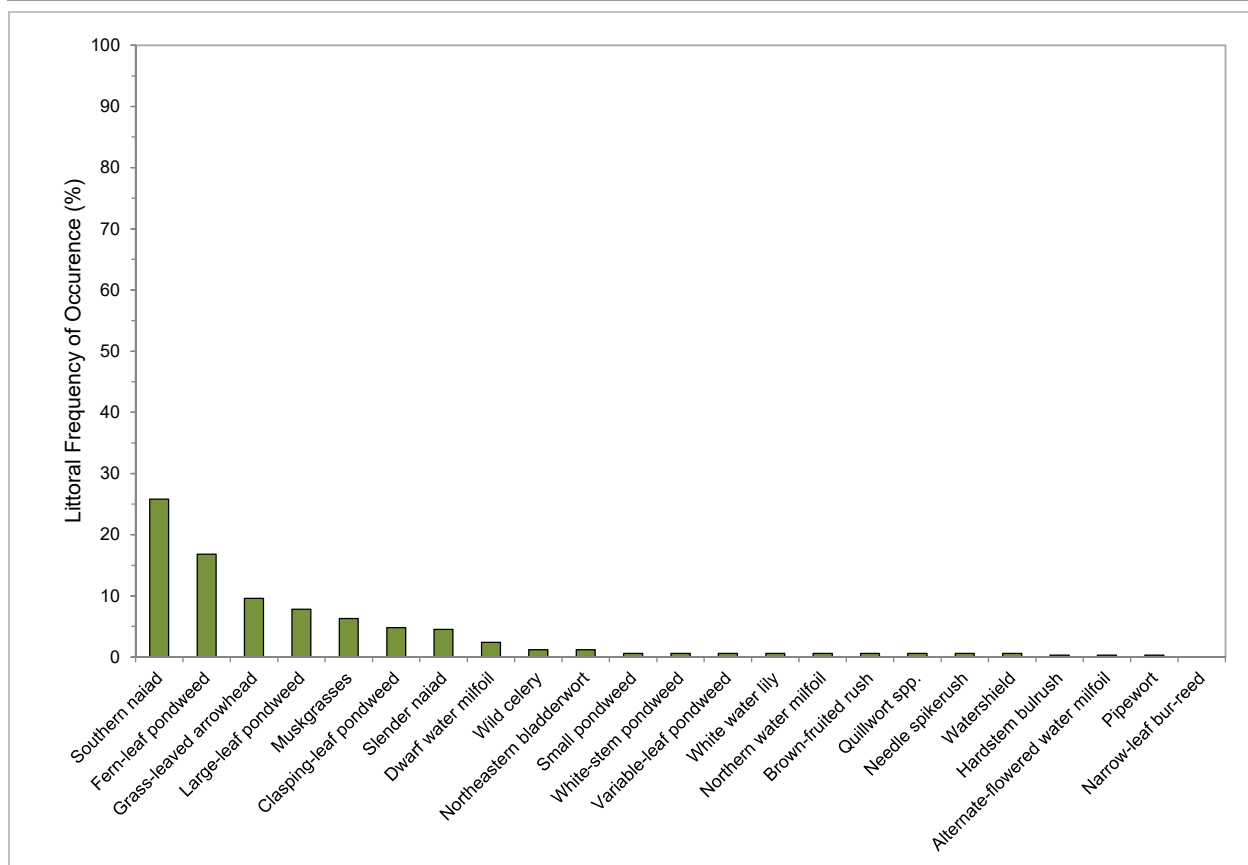


Figure 5. Littoral frequency of occurrence of aquatic plant species in Deerskin Lake in 2015. Created using data from Onterra 2015 point-intercept survey.

As its name indicates, fern pondweed resembles a terrestrial fern frond in appearance (Photo 3), and is often a dominant species in plant communities of northern Wisconsin lakes. Fern pondweed is generally found growing in thick beds over soft substrates, where it stabilizes bottom sediments and provides a dense network of structural habitat for aquatic wildlife. In 2015, fern pondweed was most abundant in some of the deeper sites in which plants were located between 11-15 feet of water.



Photo 3. Fern pondweed.

Grass-leaved arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea*) was the third most encountered species during the 2015 survey. Usually thought of as an emergent species, in most occurrences during the 2015 survey, this species was instead found as a basal rosette lacking flowering stalks or floating leaves and fully submerged on the lake-bed often in four to eight feet of water. It is believed that the crested arrowhead (*Sagittaria cristata*) identified in the 2007 survey was likely the morphologically similar grass-leaved arrowhead. These two species are combined for analysis purposes in this report.

Large-leaf pondweed, the fourth most encountered species during the 2015 point-intercept survey, is also known as musky cabbage. This species has the largest leaves of any pondweed species in Wisconsin and provides excellent cover for both small and large fish alike.

During the 2007 and 2015 surveys on Deerskin Lake, one native aquatic plant species was located that is currently listed as *special concern* on the WDNR's endangered and threatened species list (WDNR 2011). Northeastern bladderwort (*Utricularia resupinata*) is listed as special concern due to its rarity in Wisconsin and uncertainty regarding its population within the state. Northeastern bladderwort has a high coefficient of conservatism, indicating that these plants are sensitive to environmental disturbance and require high-quality environmental conditions to survive.



Photo 4. Flower of Northeastern bladderwort, a species listed as special concern in Wisconsin.

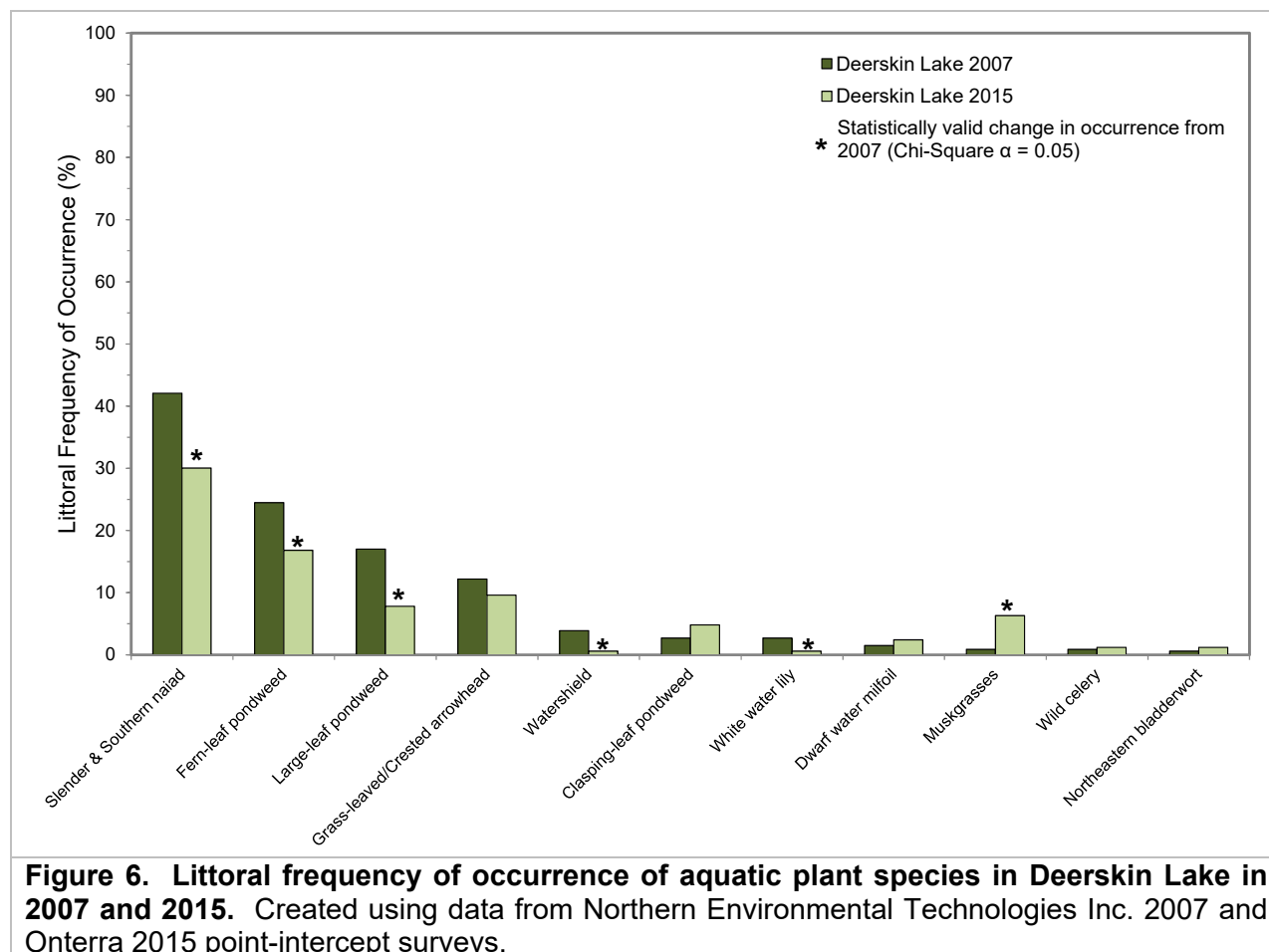
Northeastern bladderwort is found in the sandy, shallow areas (1-4 feet) of Deerskin Lake. Hard to locate unless in flower, this species possesses small, fine stems that spread via rhizomes within the sediment; only a small portion of the stem is visible above the sediment. Flowers of northeastern bladderwort extend above the water's surface when in bloom (Photo 4). Northeastern bladderwort is one of several bladderwort species that can be found in Wisconsin and was the only species that was located in Deerskin Lake in either 2007 or 2015 (Table 1). These plants are carnivorous, possessing small sac-like bladders which they use to trap and digest small aquatic invertebrates.

As discussed previously, a point-intercept survey was conducted in 2007 as part of the development of a lake management plan for Deerskin Lake. Since the sampling methodology and sampling locations were the same as the survey conducted in 2015, the data that were collected during these surveys can be compared to determine if any changes in the occurrences of aquatic plant species occurred over this eight-year period. Figure

6 displays the 2007 and 2015 littoral frequencies of occurrence of aquatic plant species in Deerskin Lake.

Five native aquatic plant species exhibited statistically valid reductions in their littoral frequencies of occurrence from 2007 to 2015 (Chi-square $\alpha = 0.05$), and include both naiads, fern-leaf pondweed, large-leaf pondweed, watershield, and white-water lily (Figure 6). Due to the belief that southern naiad was likely mis-identified as slender naiad during the 2007 survey, the combined occurrences of southern and slender naiads are used for comparison between the two surveys. One native species that is not a true vascular plant but belongs to a genus of macroalgae collectively called muskgrasses, exhibited a statistically valid increase in population between 2007 and 2015. Often growing in dense beds, muskgrasses stabilize bottom sediments, provide excellent structural habitat for aquatic organisms, and are sources of food for fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife (Borman et al. 2007). The occurrences of grass-leaved/crested arrowhead, clasping-leaf pondweed, dwarf-water milfoil, wild celery, and northeastern bladderwort were not statistically different from 2007 to 2015 (Figure 6).

Aquatic plant communities are dynamic, and the abundance of certain species can fluctuate from year-to-year depending on climatic conditions, water levels, herbivory, competition, and disease among other factors, and slight fluctuations are to be expected. Eight years is a significant period of time between surveys, and it is not believed that there is any one reason for the observed declines in the aforementioned five species, but likely a combination of natural environmental variations. Similar levels of change would likely be found among the species located in Deerskin Lake if the point-intercept survey is completed in another 8 years.



Environmental conditions that have occurred between these two surveys have favored the increase of certain species and the declines of others. This fluctuation in species' abundance plays into the theory of the importance of having a diverse aquatic plant community. In diverse communities, when the growth of certain species is not favorable in some years, there are other species there to compensate or fulfill the ecosystem services lost or reduced.

As discussed in the primer section, the calculations used for the Floristic Quality Index (FQI) for a lake's aquatic plant community are based on the aquatic plant species that were encountered on the rake during the point-intercept survey and does not include incidental species. For example, while a total 34 native aquatic plant species were located in Deerskin Lake during the 2015 surveys, 22 were encountered on the rake during the point-intercept survey. These 22 native species and their conservatism values were used to calculate the FQI of Deerskin Lake's aquatic plant community in 2015 (equation shown below).

$$\text{FQI} = \text{Average Coefficient of Conservatism} * \sqrt{\text{Number of Native Species}}$$

Figure 7 compares the FQI components of Deerskin Lake from the 2007 and 2015 point-intercept surveys to median values of lakes within the Northern Lakes and Forests-Lakes (NLFL) ecoregion as well as the entire State of Wisconsin. Twenty-two native aquatic plant species were located on the lake in 2015 compared to 15 in 2007. Two species identified in 2007 were not located in the 2015 survey (common waterweed and crested arrowhead). As stated previously, it is believed that the grass-leaved arrowhead was mis-identified during the 2007 survey as the morphologically similar crested arrowhead and the two species are lumped for analysis purposes. Eight species were encountered on the point-intercept survey in 2015 that were not encountered during the 2007 survey. These species include hardstem bulrush, pipewort, quillwort, alternate-flowered water milfoil, northern water milfoil, southern naiad, small pondweed, and needle spikerush. The species richness value from 2007 falls below the median value for lakes within the NLFL ecoregion, whereas the 2015 value falls above the median ecoregion and state values (Figure 7).

The average conservatism values for native aquatic plant species in Deerskin Lake were slightly different between the 2007 and 2015 surveys, with values of 6.9 and 7.3, respectively (Figure 7). These values fall above the median value for lakes within the NLFL ecoregion and slightly below the median for lakes throughout Wisconsin. This indicates that Deerskin Lake contains more species with higher conservatism values than the majority of lakes within the ecoregion, but slightly less when compared to lakes state-wide.

Combining the lake's species richness and average conservatism values to calculate the FQI values results in values of 26.8 for 2007 and 34.3 for 2015 (Figure 7). The 2007 value falls below the NLFL ecoregion and state median values, whereas the 2015 value exceeds both state and ecoregion mean values, indicating the floristic quality of Deerskin Lake's aquatic plant community in 2015 was of higher quality than the majority of lakes in Wisconsin. This analysis also indicates that the quality of Deerskin Lake's aquatic plant community has improved significantly from 2007 to 2015. The increase in FQI between the two surveys can be attributed to both greater species richness in 2015 and the fact that several of the additional species located in 2015 had high conservatism values which brought the average higher.

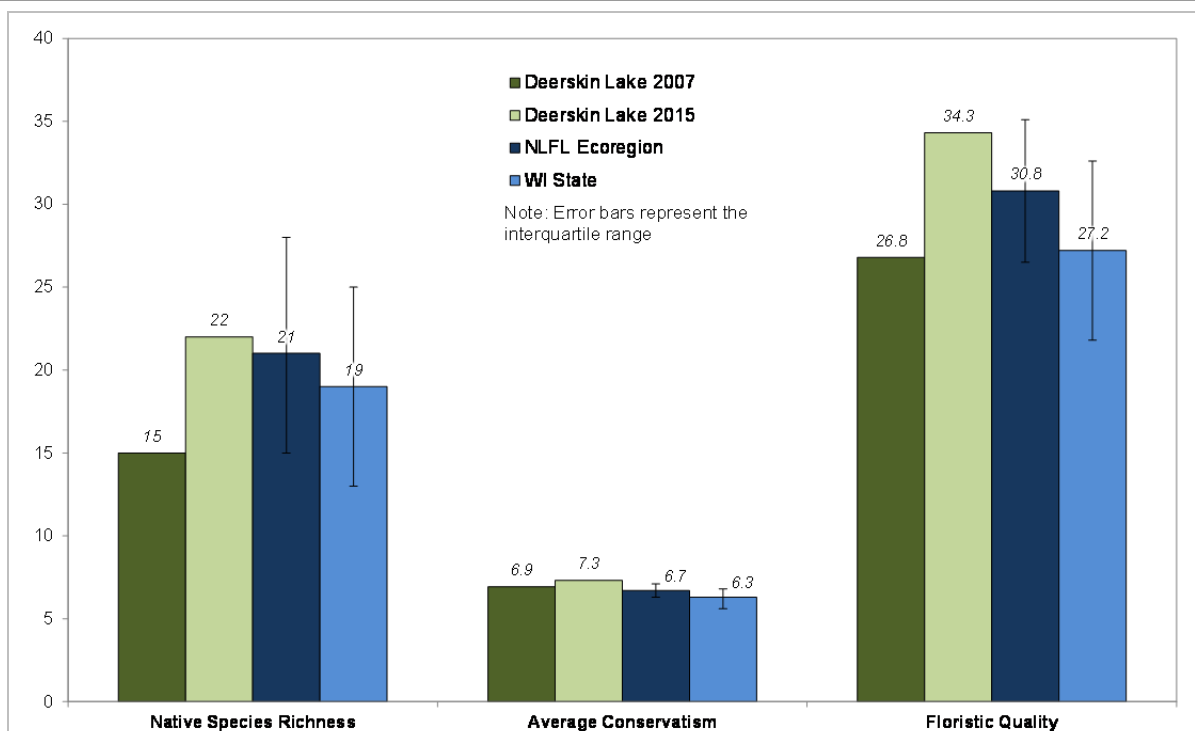


Figure 7. Deerskin Lake Floristic Quality Analysis. Created using data from Northern Environmental Technologies inc. 2007 and Onterra 2015 point-intercept surveys. Regional and state medians created with Onterra and WDNR data. NLFL = Northern Lakes and Forests - Lakes.

As explained earlier, lakes with diverse aquatic plant communities have higher resilience to environmental disturbances and greater resistance to invasion by non-native plants. In addition, a plant community with a mosaic of species with differing morphological attributes provides zooplankton, macroinvertebrates, fish, and other wildlife with diverse structural habitat and various sources of food. Because Deerskin Lake contains a fairly high number of native aquatic plant species, one may assume the aquatic plant community has high species diversity. However, species diversity is also influenced by how evenly the plant species are distributed within the community.

While a method for characterizing diversity values of fair, poor, etc. does not exist, lakes within the same ecoregion may be compared to provide an idea of how Deerskin Lake's diversity value ranks. Using data WDNR Science Services and Onterra, quartiles were calculated for 85 lakes within the NCHF Ecoregion (Figure 8). Comparisons to Deerskin Lake's species diversity are displayed using *boxplots* that showing median values and upper/lower quartiles of lakes in the same ecoregion and in the state. Box plots, or box-and-whisker diagrams, show data through five-number summaries: minimum, lower quartile, median, upper quartile, and maximum. Just as the median divides the data into upper and lower halves, quartiles further divide the data by calculating the median of each half of the dataset.

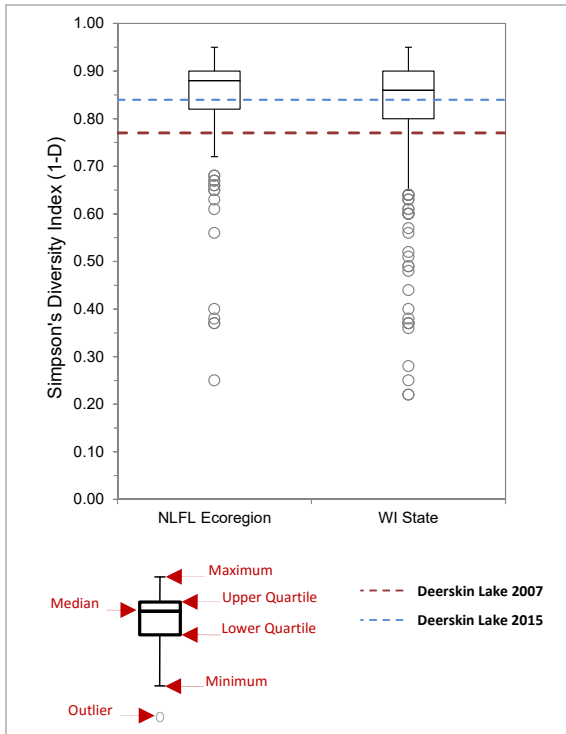
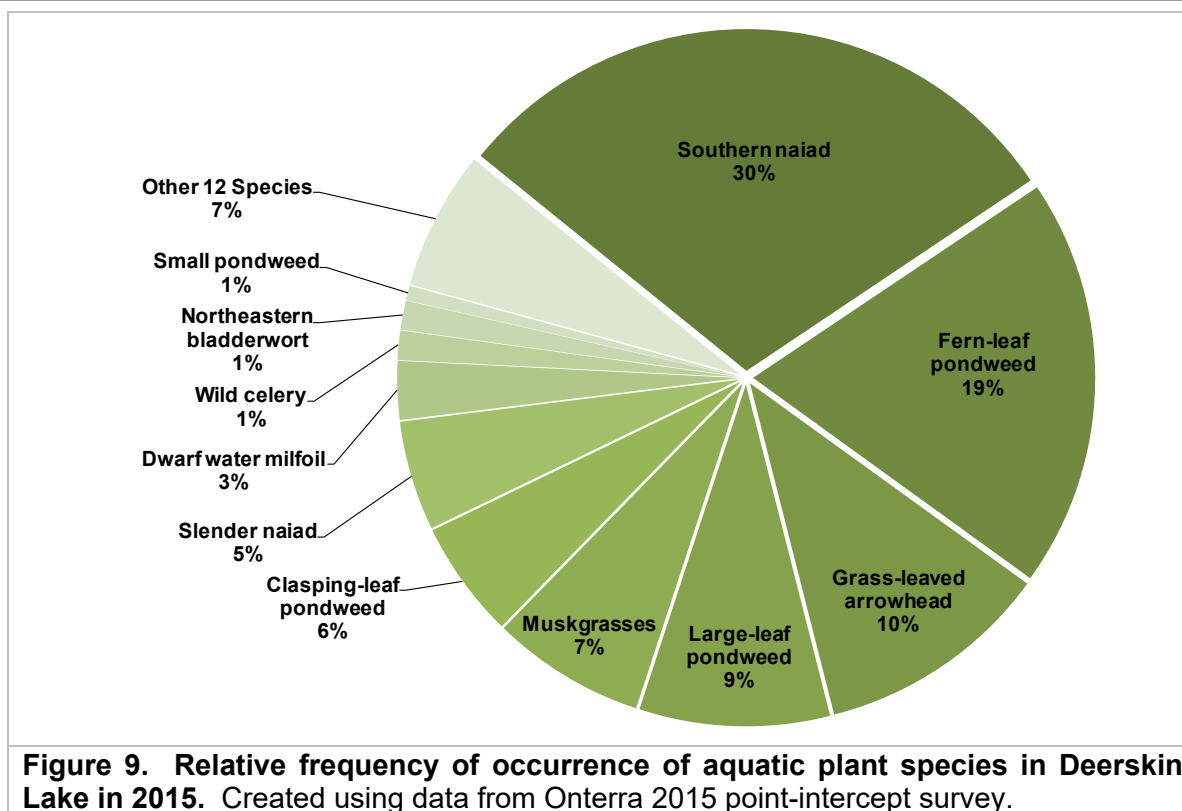


Figure 8. Deerskin Lake Simpson's Diversity Index. Created using data from Northern Environmental 2007 and Onterra 2015 point-intercept surveys. Ecoregion and state data created using WDNR and Onterra data.

Using the data collected from the 2007 and 2015 point-intercept surveys, Deerskin Lake's aquatic plant community was shown to have Simpson's Diversity Index values of 0.77 in 2007 and 0.84 in 2015 (Figure 8). These values fall below the median values for lakes within the NLFL ecoregion and lakes throughout Wisconsin, indicating Deerskin Lake has below average species diversity. In other words, if two individual aquatic plants were randomly sampled from Deerskin Lake in 2015, there would be an 84% probability that they would be different species.

As previously discussed, the littoral frequency of occurrence analysis allows for an understanding of how often each plant species is located during the point-intercept survey. Because each sampling location may contain numerous plant species, relative frequency of occurrence is one tool to evaluate how often each plant species is found in relation to all other species found (composition of population). For instance, while fern-leaf pondweed was found at approximately 16.8 % of the littoral sampling locations in Deerskin Lake in 2015, the relative frequency of occurrence was 19%. Explained another way, if 100 plants were

randomly sampled from Deerskin Lake, 19 of them would be fern-leaf pondweed. Figure 9 displays the relative occurrence of aquatic plant species from Deerskin Lake in 2015, and illustrates that nearly half of the plant population in the lake is dominated by southern naiad (30%) and fern-leaf pondweed (19%).



Non-native Plants in Deerskin Lake

Eurasian water milfoil

Eurasian-water milfoil (EWM) was not known to be present in Deerskin Lake prior to 2015 and the point-intercept survey conducted in 2015 is one method used to search for the species. At the start of the point-intercept survey conducted by Onterra on July 28, 2015, one survey crew identified a floating fragment suspected to be EWM near the northern shore of the lake. The suspected EWM fragment was vouchered and sent to the UW-Stevens Point Herbarium where it was confirmed as being the non-native exotic species EWM. Onterra staff continued to search for more occurrences of EWM during the remainder of the point-intercept survey and no additional EWM plants were found.

A survey crew from the WDNR visited Deerskin Lake on August 7, 2015 to search for EWM. During their survey, two species of native milfoils were identified in the lake (northern water milfoil and alternate-flowered water milfoil) and no rooted or floating EWM plants were found.

During the week of August 16th, 2015, volunteer members of the lake association located an additional floating fragment of suspected EWM in the lake. The fragment was confirmed as EWM by the WDNR and was sent to the UWSP herbarium for further documentation.

Actively growing, rooted EWM plants were not located in Deerskin Lake in 2015.

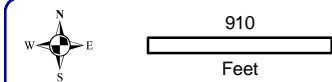
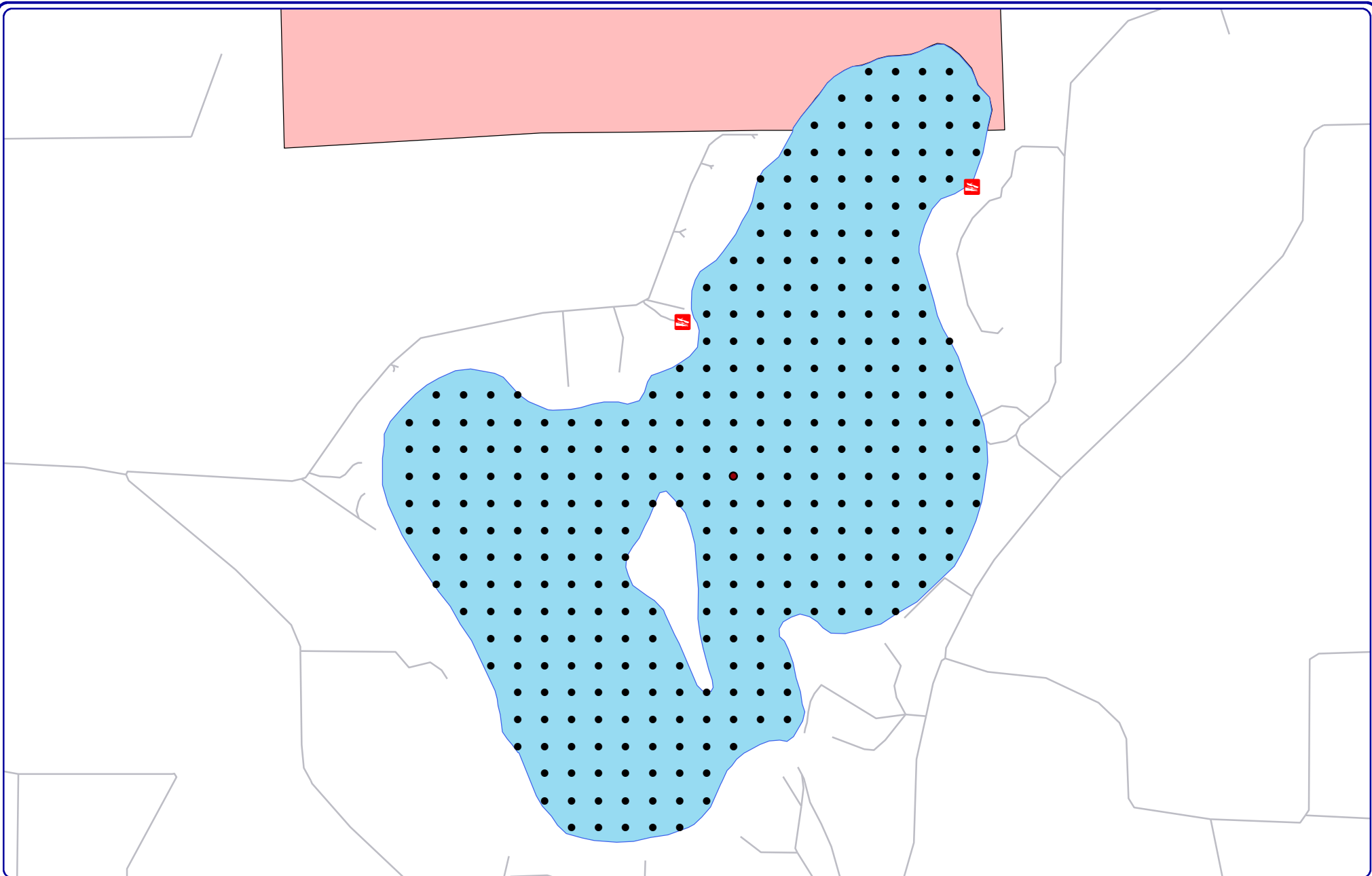
SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive aquatic plant studies conducted on Deerskin Lake in 2015 indicate that the lake's aquatic plant community is of high quality, containing high species richness as well as supporting relatively rare and environmentally sensitive species. While comparisons with the data gathered in 2007 indicated that some species declined and others increased in their occurrence, there were no changes that signify environmental degradation. Overall, Deerskin Lake's aquatic plant community is healthy, and at present, EWM is the primary threat to its integrity. The point-intercept data collected in 2015 has been provided to the WDNR and are included with this report as Appendix A.

The discovery of floating fragments of EWM in 2015 is troubling, but no actively growing EWM plants have been confirmed in the lake suggesting that any possible infestation appears to be in its early stages, if it actually exists at all. Surveys aimed at locating occurrences of EWM are scheduled for early-summer of 2016. The results of these surveys will determine the extent of the possible EWM population in the lake and how the DSLA moves forward with EWM management in Deerskin Lake.

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Sources:
 Roads and Hydro: WDNR
 Map Date: October 22, 2014
 Filename: Map1_Deerskin_Grant_Proposal.mxd



Project Location in Wisconsin

Legend

- Deerskin Lake ~ 301 acres
WDNR Definition
- Public Owned Lands
- Public Access
- Point-Intercept Survey Location
60 meter spacing, 337 total points

Map 1

Deerskin Lake
 Vilas County, Wisconsin

**Project Location
 & Lake Boundaries**

A

APPENDIX A

Aquatic Plant Survey Data

