

**AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES**  
**CONTROL PROJECT PROPOSAL**  
**HYDRAULIC CONVEYOR HARVESTER**

Florence County, WI



*Marinette County Personnel Demonstrating Hydraulic Vacuum Conveyor Harvester*

by

Sponsor: Florence County Lakes And Rivers Association, FCLARA

Robert P. Richard, Independent Grant Writer  
Margie Yadro, Florence County Conservationist

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Florence County's lakes and rivers have been exposed to Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) such as Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*). Discovered first in Frog Lake, Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) or its hybrid is now documented in local water bodies that include Barrens Lake, Lake Ellwood, North Lake, Pine River Flowage, Sea Lion Lake, Seidel Lake, and Twin Falls Flowage (appendix A).

Florence County officials, lake association members, residents and property owners have been actively engaged in AIS prevention, control, and management of pioneer to somewhat established invasives. Through cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), the Wild Rivers Invasive Species Coalition (WRISC), and Florence County's Land Conservation Department (LCD), these efforts have included: financial support for lake management planning; multi-media public AIS education; staff and volunteer training, lake monitoring and watercraft inspections; manual removal such as hand pulling; aquatic herbicide treatments; and recently, a hydraulic vacuum conveyor system.

As a result of the rapid response and continued support of local volunteers, particularly members of the Florence County Lakes And Rivers Association (FCLARA), and the professional staff of WRISC and the Florence County LCD: funding was secured to provide paid CBCW watercraft inspectors at the highest volume/source waters in Florence County; additional grant project is being requested to provide for county water bodies to be closely monitored for presence/absence of AIS; and, that manual and mechanical removal demonstrations show the Harvester Vacuum Conveyor (HVC) system as a viable treatment option given the premise of pioneer EWM populations<sup>1,2</sup>.

## AIS THREAT

Invasive macrophytes continue to apply ever increasing pressure on maintaining water quality and healthy native ecosystems in northeast Wisconsin's outdoor enthusiast destinations. Neighboring counties, such as Marinette County lakes and rivers have been exposed to NR 40 regulated plants such as EWM, yellow floating heart (*Nymphoides peltata*), curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*), and hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*). On the Florence County's south and east borders, Forest County, has also documented EWM, yellow floating heart, and curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) populations.

At this time, EWM occurrences are relatively small within Florence, Forest, and Marinette Counties, but all are on the frontline of the EWM invasion, *see Figure 1*. Additionally, Florence County shares a common border with Michigan. Iron and Dickinson Counties, located to the south and east, both have numerous EWM populations: Iron County having 21 occurrences and Dickinson County with 67 occurrences<sup>4</sup>.

Florence County is home to over 250 lakes where 206 of those (80% or more) are less than 40 acres in size. Though small lakes seem easier to monitor and treat after positive AIS identification, they are also more likely to have fewer residents, which often limit resources for AIS control. These small lakes present unique opportunities for long-term AIS management. Additional tools are needed for efficient and effective treatment options to improve healthy aquatic ecosystems and maintain public use.

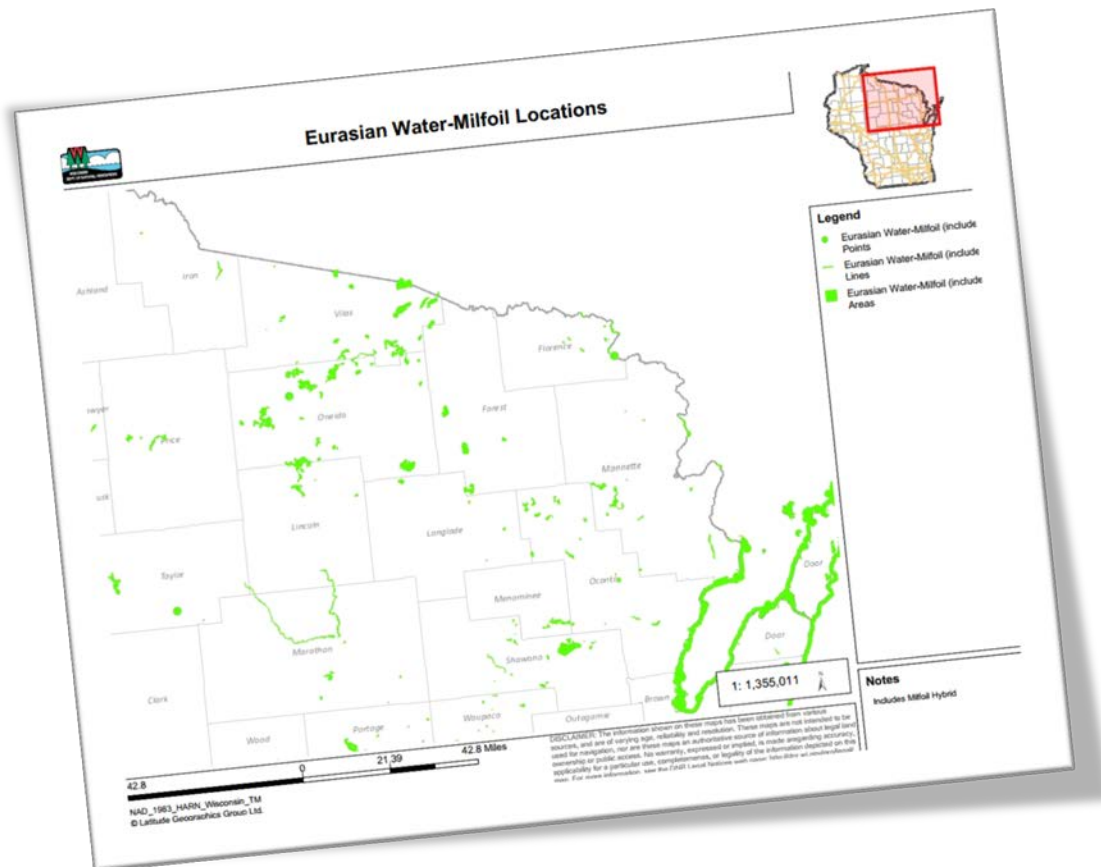
## PREVENTION AND CONTROL STRATEGY

FCLARA has kicked off the 2014 boater season by requesting a CBCW grant from the WDNR that will provide paid watercraft inspectors at 3 of the county's busiest boat landings at prime time. Two heated pressure washer units will be available to be used as decontamination stations especially at zebra mussel source waters. Several access points along the Menominee River, a state AIS Source Water, will be given top priority, especially during high exposure events. This will provide added protection in slowing the spread, and another teaching tool to emphasize prevention and containment of several invasive species.

The CBCW grant was awarded (appendix B) to FCLARA as the sponsor on January 22, 2014 and will be administered by WRISC. Boat wash use with watercraft inspections are expected to reduce the risk of introducing neighboring CLP or yellow floating heart along with other NR 40 regulated plants and animals.

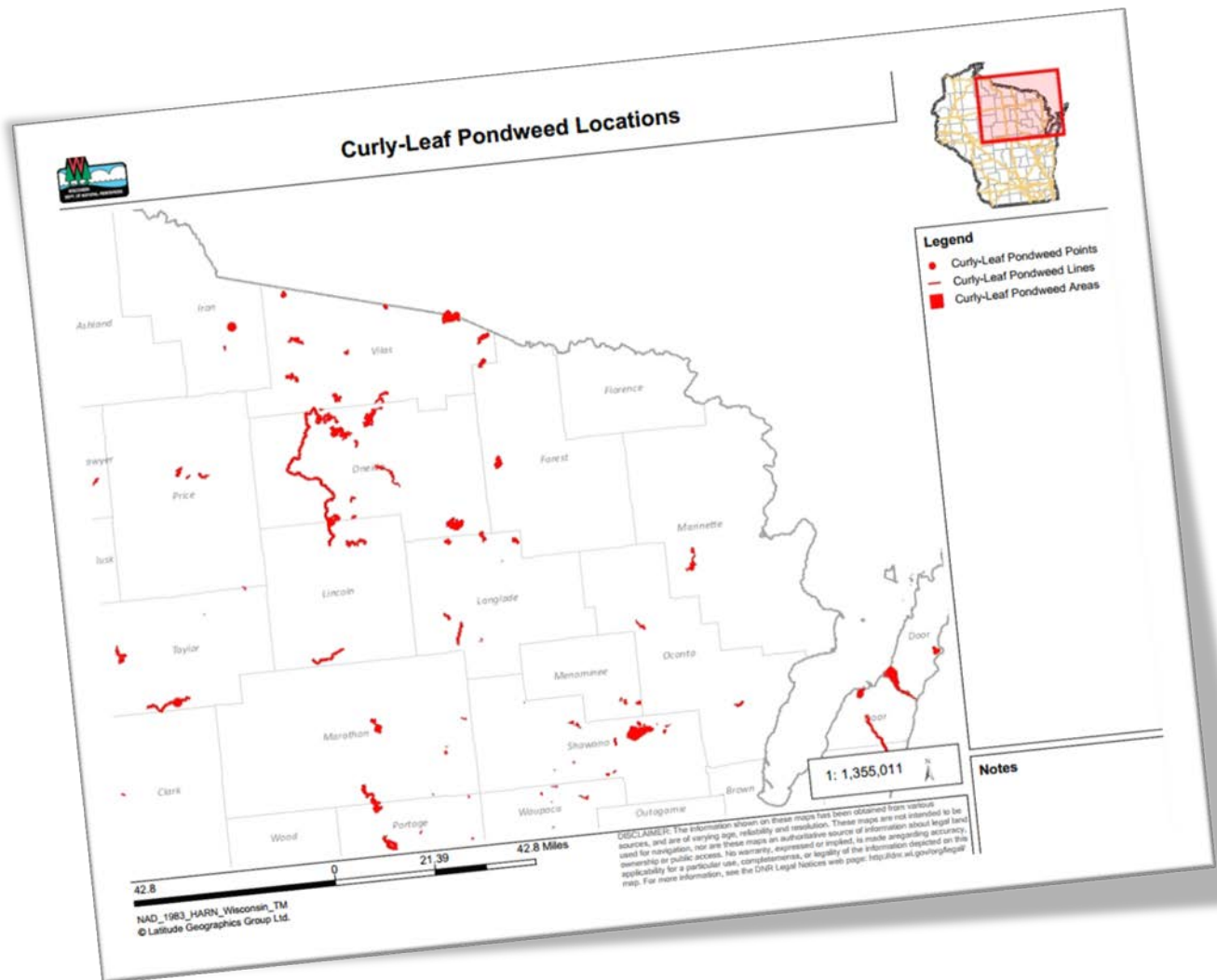
The WRISC Coordinator will be available to host volunteer and staff training sessions following protocols of the CBCW, AIS Presence/Absence and Citizen Lake Monitoring Network/Project RED programs. All related data collected will be entered into SWIMS state data base with assistance from Florence County LCD staff.

**Figure 1. Eurasian water-milfoil locations in northeastern Wisconsin.**



Florence County is currently on the invading front for CLP. Forest and Menominee Counties have recently discovered CLP, see *Figure 2*. In addition to the counties in Wisconsin, both Iron and Dickinson Counties in Michigan each have two reported occurrences of CLP<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 2. Curly-leaf pondweed locations in northeastern Wisconsin.**



## PROJECT OUTLINE

This project adds another teaching and management resource to help slow the spread of invasive species and better equips Florence County landowners, visitors and LCD personnel to strive to meet a high priority goal of Florence County's *Land and Water Resource Management* plan.

The protection of bio-diversity of native land and water ecosystems is being accomplished through multi-media public education venues, developing lake management plans, supporting watercraft inspections and decontamination stations, training volunteers for diligent AIS presence/absence monitoring, raising awareness in BMPs and securing appropriate management techniques and resources.

This grant project requests resources to develop a mobile hydraulic vacuum conveyor (HVC) system similar to the one currently used in Marinette County that would increase manual harvesting efficiency and decreases fragmentation during harvesting operations, leading to fewer follow up treatments and an overall decrease in treatment costs. The variability of treatment options increases as the HVC system could plausibly be used on any invasive macrophyte. The HVC system can also be used in conjunction with aquatic herbicide treatments or as a follow up treatment and provides a great tool for a rapid response to pioneer populations. As many lakes in Florence County do not have lake organizations and management plans, this would in most cases translate to an additional year without treatment as they become eligible grant sponsors. The one year delay could lead to a greater scale of treatment in the following years. FCLARA again fills the need as an eligible 501(C) 3 qualified sponsor.

Following Florence County officials' donation of financial support for lake management plans, the Florence County LCD works with local lake organizations including the Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes, Frog Lake, and Lake Ellwood, to implement EWM management programs that are tailored to meet local needs and conditions. Florence County LCD has also been actively engaged in monitoring and hand pulling EWM on North Lake, Barren's Lake and Sea Lion Lake. The hand pulling was completely effective on North Lake after one year of treatment; however, EWM was then discovered in Middle Lake in 2013. The treatment was somewhat effective on Barren's Lake and Sea Lion Lake, but follow up treatments will be necessary. Lake Ellwood has been periodically treating EWM with 2,4-D since 2003. As these previous treatments have delivered limited long term control, the local lake association members have chosen manual and mechanical treatment as the only AIS management methods to be used until the spring of 2018.

The variability of the treatments already carried out on aforementioned lakes presents the opportunity to gain insight into the effectiveness of a mobile HVC system in "real world" conditions, and allows for a depth of treatment options in the unfolding development of AIS treatment methodology and protocol.

## **PROJECT LAKES**

### **Lake Ellwood**

Lake Ellwood (figure 3, WBIC 650500) is a 130 acre, oligotrophic, seepage lake found adjacent to the Spread Eagle Barrens, a state natural area. The lake has one public boat landing and is located in the Town of Florence (T39N, R19E, S16&17) in Florence County Wisconsin (Figure 3.). The lake has a maximum depth of 25 feet, and an average secchi depth of 12.4 feet. Lake Ellwood supports panfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and northern pike populations. Smallmouth bass were stocked in 1973. Northern pike were stocked from 1998-2002, and again in 2013. Riparian landowners continue to request shoreline restoration technical assistance and cost-share offered by Florence County LCD. Native plantings and erosion control methods will be offered to area landowners during the course of this project.

**Figure 3. Lake Ellwood and Frog Lake.**



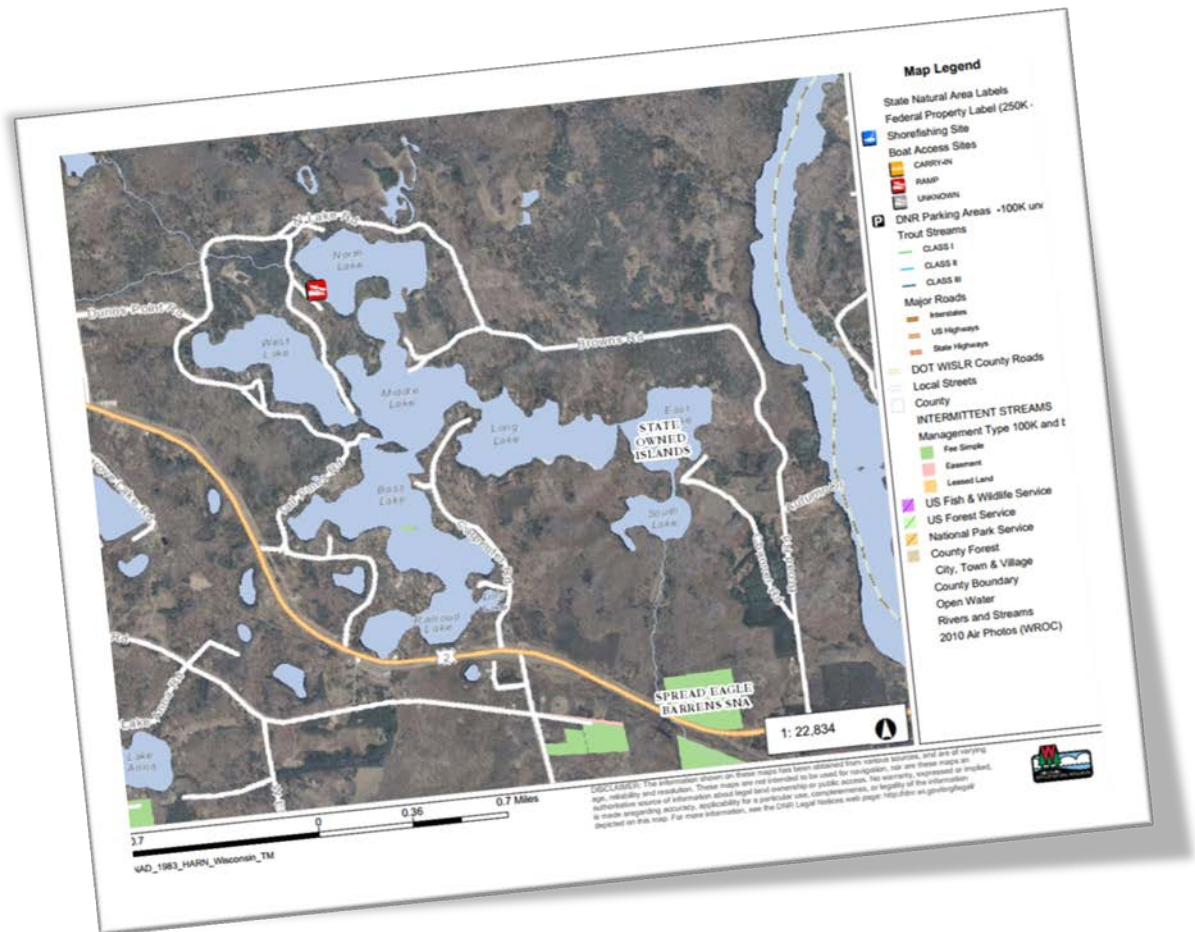
### Frog Lake

Frog Lake (WBIC 585700) is a 28 acre, mesotrophic, seepage lake, also adjacent to the Spread Eagle Barrens, a state natural area. Located in the Town of Florence (T39N, R19E, S16) in Florence County, Wisconsin (Figure 3) Frog Lake has one public boat landing. The lake has a maximum depth of 21 feet, and an average secchi depth of 12.3 feet. Frog Lake supports panfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, and walleye populations.

### Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes

The Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes (SECOL) consists of Bass Lake, East Lake, Long Lake, Middle Lake, North Lake, Railroad Lake, South Lake, and West Lake. SECOL has one public boat landing access on North Lake located in the Town of Florence (T40N, R19E,S32) in Florence County, Wisconsin, *see Figure 4*. EWM was discovered in North Lake in 2012, and in Middle Lake in 2013.

Figure 4. Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes



EWM was hand pulled upon initial discovery in each case, and did not come back in North Lake. The results of the hand pulling treatment in Middle Lake will be determined in the 2014 season. The discovery of EWM within the system demonstrates the need and plausibility of rapid response treatments. Middle Lake (WBIC 702600) is a 91 acre drainage lake that has a maximum depth of 75 feet and an average secchi depth of 16.5 feet. Middle Lake supports populations of panfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, and walleye.

Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) were discovered in North Lake in 2012, and have rapidly established themselves in 2013<sup>7</sup>. Strict adherence to the Wisconsin DNR Boat and Gear Disinfection Protocol<sup>8</sup> will be observed, as well as the addition of a triple rinse for all gear associated within the pumping apparatus. The triple rinse protocol is a standard in cleansing gear used for terrestrial herbicide application, and should also be appropriate to flush all undesired species from the equipment. Florence County LCD also has access to a mobile high temperature pressure washer this is used by the watercraft inspectors. After all equipment has been cleansed it will be quarantined and dried for a minimum of 5 days. Additionally, the treatments will be strategically planned to maximize the duration of the period of time in which the HVC system is out of water after being used in SECOL due to the presence of zebra mussels.



## **Other Area Lakes**

If funded, FCLARA and Florence County LCD will work with cooperative agencies, elected officials, lake associations and landowners in prioritizing use of the HVC system for the next three years. When available, agreements may be considered with neighboring counties or watersheds where the HVC system would address a rapid response needed to manage pioneer AIS invasions.

FCLARA is in a unique position to assist these lakes in their efforts of treating AIS by investing in the capital equipment through this grant program and, partnering with Florence County LCD staff to request an additional grant for personnel to operate the HVC system equipment. Other personnel duties will include training, related data collection, reporting, and continued lake monitoring.

## **AIS INFORMATION & EDUCATION EFFORTS**

Florence County LCD hosts semi-annual Watershed Improvement Commission meetings in order to engage the general public and lake organizations, in directing AIS monitoring and management efforts and resources. The WRISC Board of Directors also meet bi-monthly. These venues will serve as a great opportunity to discuss and plan the use of the HVC system.

Florence County LCD, WRISC, and FCLARA maintain websites which provide additional opportunities for the general public to access information on fisheries and AIS issues in the county and region. FCLARA produces 4 newsletters annually to inform members of issues and news stories regarding Florence County waters and hosts regular meetings which could also serve as forums to discuss and plan the use of the HVC system in addition to the study lakes.

## **PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The FCLARA HVC system project has several initial goals including:

- Building an HVC system for enhanced manual harvesting of EWM on high priority locations and project lakes, for use in combating pioneer infestation
- Supplementing the EWM management programs tailored to Lake Ellwood, Frog Lake, and Middle Lake
- Documenting the long-term effectiveness of the HVC system in “real world” conditions under variable treatment types on the project lakes.
- Providing available resources that support the establishment of a Florence County LCD/WRISC rapid response team that is able to extract pioneer invasive populations in the watershed.

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

The project proposal calls for the development of a mobile HVC system similar to the one currently used in Marinette County that will increase manual harvesting efficiency and reduce the amount of fragmentation during harvesting operations. The HVC system will be based on a pontoon boat with motor. Basic components will include a gasoline powered water pump which drives a venture pump to create suction, a pickup hose, a filtering system to separate plants from the water, and a hookah air system to provide air to the diver.

A team of two workers operates the HVC system. A diver guides the invasive plant into the suction end of the hydraulic vacuum conveyor, and then loosens the root system of the plant so it can be sucked up and transported to the surface. At the surface, the second person working on the boat, monitors equipment and sorts and bags plants for disposal. Properly operated, the HVC system disturbs little if any sediment during harvesting operations.

Grant funded Limited Term Employees (LTEs) working for Florence County LCD will operate the HVC system to enhance manual harvesting on the project lakes in support of the local EWM management programs for a period of three years, or as determined by funding. The enhanced manual harvesting will be used to follow treatments of aquatic herbicides to control EWM and as a mop-up operation that removes pioneer colonies before they become a nuisance. By utilizing this method, it is hoped that herbicide use can be substantially reduced or even eliminated. The HVC system would also be available for use on lakes in surrounding counties as needed to manage pioneer infestations at source waters.

The project proposal also calls for studying the long-term effectiveness of enhanced manual harvesting by tracking the fate of individual plants and documenting the re-infestation rate within test plots. A statistically significant number of permanent plots will be randomly placed after delineation of EWM presence/non-presence. The desired coefficient of variation (CV) will be 80% using the formula:  $CV = \frac{s}{\bar{x}} (100)$ . Given the small size of the lakes and possible variation the maximum number of samples will be capped at 15 per lake. The circular plots will be 1/1000 acre in size, and be established by a highly visible stake that will be removed after the study years. Stem densities will be counted in the circular plots and surveyed pre-treatment, post-treatment and annually thereafter. Annual AIS reconnaissance and mapping will also be completed on the project lakes to track changes and modify management plans as needed.

## **TASK SUMMARY**

1. First, acquire a pontoon boat, motor and trailer suitable for building a mobile HVC system designed very similar to Marinette County's unit.
2. Purchase necessary operational equipment and training to allow for a certified diver and assistant to operate enhanced vacuum harvesting system.
3. Purchase liability insurance coverage and any related treatment permits.
4. Develop a priority list of treatment waters.
5. Track treatment variables including quantitative and qualitative results.
6. Present equipment at WRISC annual meeting to share information about effectiveness.
7. Protect project lakes from cross-contamination and further AIS invasion by instituting a rigorous decontamination procedure for the HVC system and all related equipment.
8. Provide pre-season maintenance and then winterize unit and place in storage at the end of each season

## DETAILED TASK DESCRIPTIONS

**1. First, acquire a pontoon boat, motor and trailer suitable for building a mobile HVC system designed very similar to Marinette County's unit.**

A qualified marine fabricator will then assemble the HVC system using off-the-shelf pumps, plumbing, and fixtures as shown and described following Marinette County's hydraulic conveyor plans and specifications (appendix C). The HVC system will be mounted on a modified pontoon boat where boat, motor, and trailer will be provided as the local matching share.

**2. Purchase necessary operational equipment and training to allow for a certified diver and assistant to begin using an enhanced vacuum harvesting system.**

EWM reconnaissance and enhanced manual harvesting will be conducted in early-mid summer when EWM growth is easier to identify and water temperatures are more conducive to working underwater for long periods of time. Permitted areas to be harvested will be mapped and marked with temporary buoys to guide harvesting operations. Treatment will be done with the assistance of the HVC system. Harvested areas will be mapped and the quantity of harvested plants will be recorded as described in the previous methods to allow for annual review of the enhanced harvesting program.

**3. Purchase liability insurance coverage and related treatment permits.**

Florence County Lakes And Rivers Association, WRISC partners and Florence County LCD will minimize their liability exposure by purchasing insurance coverage before the HVC unit is used for the purpose intended. All operators will be trained and certified.

**4. Develop a priority list of treatment waters.**

FCLARA and the WRISC AIS Action Team will work toward developing a priority list of water bodies where the HVC can be used and matched with necessary resources. Items such as available staff/volunteers, treatment permits, EWM and CLP pioneer populations and source waters, watershed impacts, geographical location, disposal sites, and other environmental factors.

**5. Track treatment variables including quantitative and qualitative results.**

It is anticipated that the HVC system will be used by Florence County LCD personnel to document its effectiveness in an integrated and rapid response AIS treatment program.

The project lakes have been selected to provide three different variables: a whole lake fluridone treatment, a 2, 4-D treatment with EWM remaining near fish cribs, and a pioneer EWM population.

**6. Present equipment at WRISC annual meeting to share information and treatment effectiveness.**

FCLARA will present the HVC system at the WRISC annual meeting which will provide an excellent opportunity for AIS managers throughout the region to observe the equipment and discuss how it fits into an integrated AIS management viewpoint. Additionally, the meeting will serve as an opportunity for interested AIS coordinators to discuss and coordinate its potential use.

**7. Protect project lakes from cross-contamination and further AIS invasion by instituting a rigorous decontamination procedure for the HVC system and all related equipment.**

Florence County LCD will strictly follow the Wisconsin DNR Boat and Gear Disinfection Protocol for the HVC system, accessory equipment, and personal equipment. Florence County LCD has access to a mobile high temperature pressure washer that is used by the watercraft inspectors. EWM reconnaissance and mapping will typically be done with the assistance of on-lake volunteers using their boats so equipment does not have to be moved between lakes.

**8. Provide pre-season maintenance and then winterize unit and place in storage at the end of each season.**

A qualified mechanic will maintain and winterize unit. It will be presented for boat storage at the end of each season.

## **TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

It is anticipated that the HVC system will be constructed for use during the 2014 growing season and beyond, subject to available personnel and volunteers. EWM or other aquatic invasive plant species treated by manual/mechanical harvesting using the HVC system will be conducted as prescribed by WDNR permit parameters. Those will be requested as needed. Expected HVC use will follow recent herbicide applications, or used on pioneer or manageable populations, and will be ongoing, as necessary, through the summer of 2016 or as resources allow. Use of the HVC will follow treatment location criteria starting with Florence County lakes and rivers, then to Forest County lakes and rivers. If resources will allow further use and all decontamination protocols have been met, additional waterbodies impacting these county watersheds will be of next priority for HVC treatment. It is estimated that the HVC unit will be in use or undergoing decontamination throughout the entire time of available staffing. Monitoring and data collection will be ongoing, dependent upon grant funding of Florence County LCD limited term summer positions. Annual reports will be completed by February 28 of the following year. Qualitative and quantitative results will be analyzed and included in the *Florence County Invasive Species Management Plan*. The final project report will be completed by February 28, 2017 and presented to local lake association members, officials and presented to the WDNR.

This project proposal has been well received by Wisconsin landowners and taxpayers, public officials, agency partners, and existing staff. We all appreciate any state resources awarded that can make this treatment option become a reality. Thanks for your consideration.

# BUDGET SHEET

## Itemized Breakdown of Expenses - 3 year budget subtotals

Item	Materials/ Labor	Volunteer Contribution Lake Groups	Equipment Contribution	Total Cost
Dry suits and masks	\$1,100.00			\$1,100.00
(3) Diver Certifications	\$897.00			\$897.00
Used Pontoon boat & motor			\$16,000.00	\$16,000.00
Used Trailer			\$950.00	\$950.00
Boat modifications/materials	\$7,250.00			\$7,250.00
Hydraulic pump system	\$2,200.00			\$2,200.00
Hookah air system	\$2,600.00			\$2,600.00
Volunteer/county boat use		\$3,600.00		\$3,600.00
Volunteer labor for EWM monitoring & mapping		\$1,500.00		\$1,500.00
Mileage	\$5,000.00			\$5,000.00
Hydraulic vacuum harvester fuel and maintenance	\$4,500.00			\$4,500.00
Decontamination costs	\$900.00			\$900.00
Boat storage/winterizing	\$1,200.00			\$1,200.00
Insurance	\$660.00			\$660.00
Calculation Equipment	\$225.00			\$225.00
Grant Writer	\$600.00			\$600.00
Grant Administration	\$2,500.00			\$2,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$29,632.00</b>	<b>\$5,100.00</b>	<b>\$16,950.00</b>	<b>\$51,682.00</b>

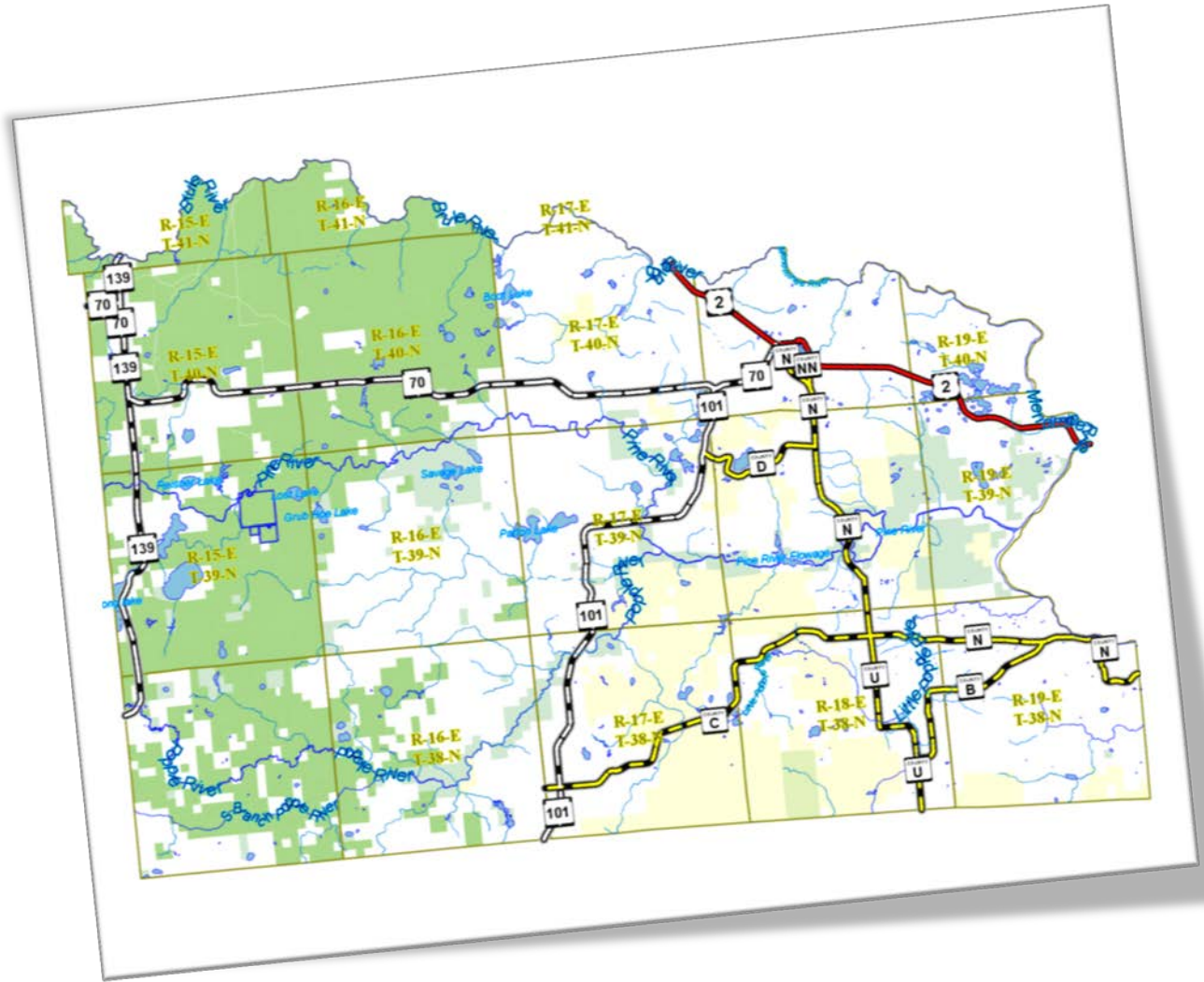
57.34%      WDNR Grant      \$29,632.00

Local Share      \$22,050.00

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*Appendix A – Florence County Map*



[Appendix B – CBCW Grant Award Letter](#)

Margie Yadro  
Florence Co Lakes & Rivers Association  
P O Box 107  
Florence, WI 54121

Dear Ms. Yadro:

Congratulations! On behalf of the Governor, we are pleased to forward to you a grant agreement for financial assistance for the following project: **2014 FCLRA Clean Boats Clean Water**

The items checked below apply to your project and grant award. Please read them carefully.

**Grant Award Time Period: April 1, 2014, through December 31, 2014.** All project activities must occur within this time period to be eligible for reimbursement.

**Advance or Reimbursement Check:** An advance payment will automatically be sent to you at the address at the top of this letter to cover costs you may incur in the initial stages of the project. You may request remaining grant funds once your project is complete and you have submitted a reimbursement form to the Department. Reimbursement request forms and financial administration information are included with this email. Please submit reimbursement claim forms to Jane Malischke.

If you have any questions about your grant award or the reimbursement procedures, contact Jane at (715) 635-4062.

You may be contacted by the Office of the Governor or your state Legislator about publication of a press release to publicize your grant award.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to participate with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Mary Rose Teves, Director  
Bureau of Community Financial Assistance



Appendix C – Marinette County’s HVC Unit

