Lake Ripley Management District

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December 20, 2019

Water Resources Management Specialists
WDNR - Fitchburg Service Area
Madison WI 53711

To Surface Water Grant Administrators:

The Lake Ripley Management District (LRMD) requests a closing of our Lake Ripley Phragmites Control Grant, written by then Lake Manager Lisa Griffin, and approved by the DNR in the 2015 Grant Cycle. It is project number **AIRR-180-15.**

Since the approval of the Grant, the LRMD has had a relatively high turnover of Lake Managers, each of whom have acted as project manager on this grant, and whom have taken different approaches. Lisa Griffin wrote the grant and managed the project for nearly three years; Andrew Sabai took over as Lake Manager in Jan 2018 and managed the project until April 2019, when I took over and have managed the project to date. Over the course of this time, the LRMD Board has never wavered on its commitment to managing this early-detected Phragmites colony. As thinking on *Phragmites australis* management has evolved, so has the Board's. They are willing to try different approaches and have made decisions based on input given them by the project manager/Lake Manager.

With the consent of our DNR Water Resources Management Specialist, I respectfully ask if we can draw down AIRR-180-15 after having completed four of five years of management, in order to finish what has been started with a new Early Detection/Rapid Response Grant that will allow for a several more years of active treatment and monitoring. Because of the renowned tenacity of this non-indigenous grass; because of a particularly challenging scrub/shrub, standing water palustrine environment with a tangle of first standing, and later downed (but not removed) woody invasives to maneuver around; because of a Fall treatment in 2017 that may have not been effective due to early on-set freezing temperatures; because of the site being private property where special care with communication, consensus-building and timing need be taken (and were occasionally difficult to manage); and because of the varying approaches that have been taken by different Lake Managers– the Phragmites control has not been as successful as the District would like to be able to report.

Our actions to date have neither eradicated nor contained the Phrag. We believe, however, that we have slowed the spread to a pace that might allow continued, aggressive treatment a potential chance at eradication and/or containment. The two clonal lobes are now about six-tenths of an acre. In 2017 they were mapped as being four-tenths of an acre. (See Addenda maps.) The fringe growth around the lobes has crept outward, yet has been contained and not significantly leapt the site.

The wetland in which the clonal lobe stand is degraded, but not without many healthy native species still in evidence. In the Fall of 2019 a partial list of species included: turtlehead, hop sedge, lake sedge, woodland sedge, bottlebrush sedge, brown fox sedge, tussock sedge, great bur weed, boneset, joe pye weed, bugleweed, golden alexander, Canada bluejoint grass, woolgrass, sneezeweed, jewelweed, marsh milkweed, and swamp aster.

In order to better "attack the right portion of the plant at the proper time within the life cycle to slow or stop current and future growth" as advised by the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative, the Lake Ripley Management District has submitted a second Early Detection/Rapid Response Grant application on Dec 5, 2019.

In December, 2019, I inquired as to how much money remained in AIRR-180-15 and was told $3919. The Lake District was given a grant advance of $1,785.96 against a total request of $7,748.83. In 2017 we received an additional $2043.24 reimbursement. I have just completed a reimbursement request for work done in 2018 and 2019 to date of $3,944.58, meaning all has been spent of the projected budget in pursuit of the objectives of the grant. Below is a summary of what was accomplished, and what was not able to be, under AIRR-180-15.

Report of AIRR-180-15

The writing in bold is quoted from the grant application written in 2014 by LRMD Lake Manager, Lisa Griffin .

"Our goal is to control phragmites at this site and reduce its occurrence to below 10% of the current 1.3 acres* or complete eradication. A combination of seed head removal, herbicide treatment, reseeding with native plant species, seasonal monitoring, and follow up herbicide treatments will be used to control the population and rehabilitate the area. Outreach to neighboring property owners and district constituents will include information and updates in our Ripples newsletter that is distributed to over 1000 residents, press releases, and during discussion and updates of our open and televised Board meetings. Numerous pictures will be taken before, during, and after control and restoration have occurred. This project, along with continued efforts through Clean Boats, Clean Waters, will continue our outreach efforts to limit the spread of invasive species."

Later in the grant she writes these more specific activities and deliverables:

"An Aquatic Plant Management plan was developed and approved on 9/26/2014. A qualified contractor will remove and dispose of seed heads and last year's standing growth. This may allow for germination of any native seed bank. Contractor will apply for herbicide permit spring 2015. Summer 2015, a cutting will reduce growth and allow for herbicide treatment in the fall. Early fall 2015 and depending on site conditions, herbicide will be applied with a back pack sprayer or wheeled vehicle with attached boom. A wetland seed mix will be distributed late fall 2015 when conditions allow. Spring/Summer/Fall 2016-2017 monitoring and spot herbicide treatments will continue with contracted professional. Fall 2017 reverification of stand boundaries and density will occur. Continued monitoring by Lake District staff will continue as part of the easement assessment. Volunteers may assist in removing seed heads or plant stalks, and monitor for additional phragmites colonies as part of spring AIS detection surveys in surrounding areas.

Annual summaries of control methods used, colony characteristics, and outreach methods will be provided. Upon completion of grant, a written report containing all data, maps, future management needs, program success and/or shortcomings will be provided."

*According to the landowner, a Board member who was an active, hands-on contributor to plan development in 2014 to the present, and other reliable witnesses, the *Phragmites australis* stand has grown, not diminished. I account for the discrepancy in measurement between the current reporting of six-tenths of one acre and the then report of a footprint of 1.3 acres, as being the result of two different approaches to measurement taken by two different reporters. The six-tenth's number is the footprint of the dense lobes of the colony; the measure of 1.3 acres was, I believe, the measure of not only the dense lobes but the extent of the fringe growth. The vast majority of the fringe growth is in the immediate vicinity of the lobes – perhaps two acres – but 3 small isolated patches have been found further out; see addended image "Exurb Phrag". These were treated in summer of 2019 and will be the focus of intense management if we are allowed to continue our work with the acceptance of a new ED/RR Grant.

From District records and from my own project leadership, I verify these actions have been taken by the District:

2015 – March – monitoring and phrag cutting and seed head removal

2015 – March – press release

2015 - May – Ripples article

2015 – August – monitor and cutting regrowth

2015 – September – foliar herbicide application

2015 – November - Fall monitoring

2016 –four monitoring events (June, August, November, December)

2016 – August herbicide application

2017 – three monitoring events (Spring, Summer, Fall)

2017 – June herbicide application

2017 – November herbicide application on east side – considered poorly timed after the fact, however, contractor was unable to get to site earlier

2017 – Native seeding

2017 – December – site reverification took place (see map "Gebhart_Phragmites_Winter 2017")

2018 – Summer monitor

2018 – Board presentation on Phragmites (? – Georgia, do you remember AS ever presenting on them?)

2019 – June Board presentation on Phragmites. Updates given August, September, October, November, December

2019 - Summer – monitor - cutting and piling of stalks to allow for Fall Herbicide treatment; permit request

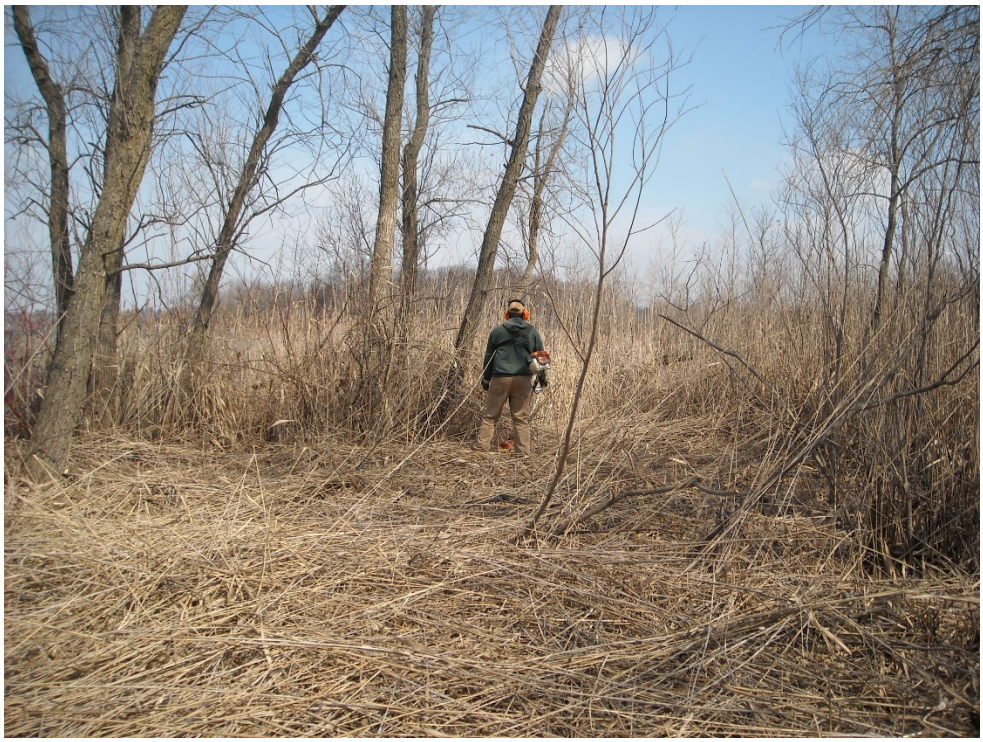
2019 – Fall – monitor - foliar Imazapyr herbicide treatment on recovered foliage

2019 – late Fall (12/4) burning of cut, piled stalks

IMAGES OVER TERM OF GRANT

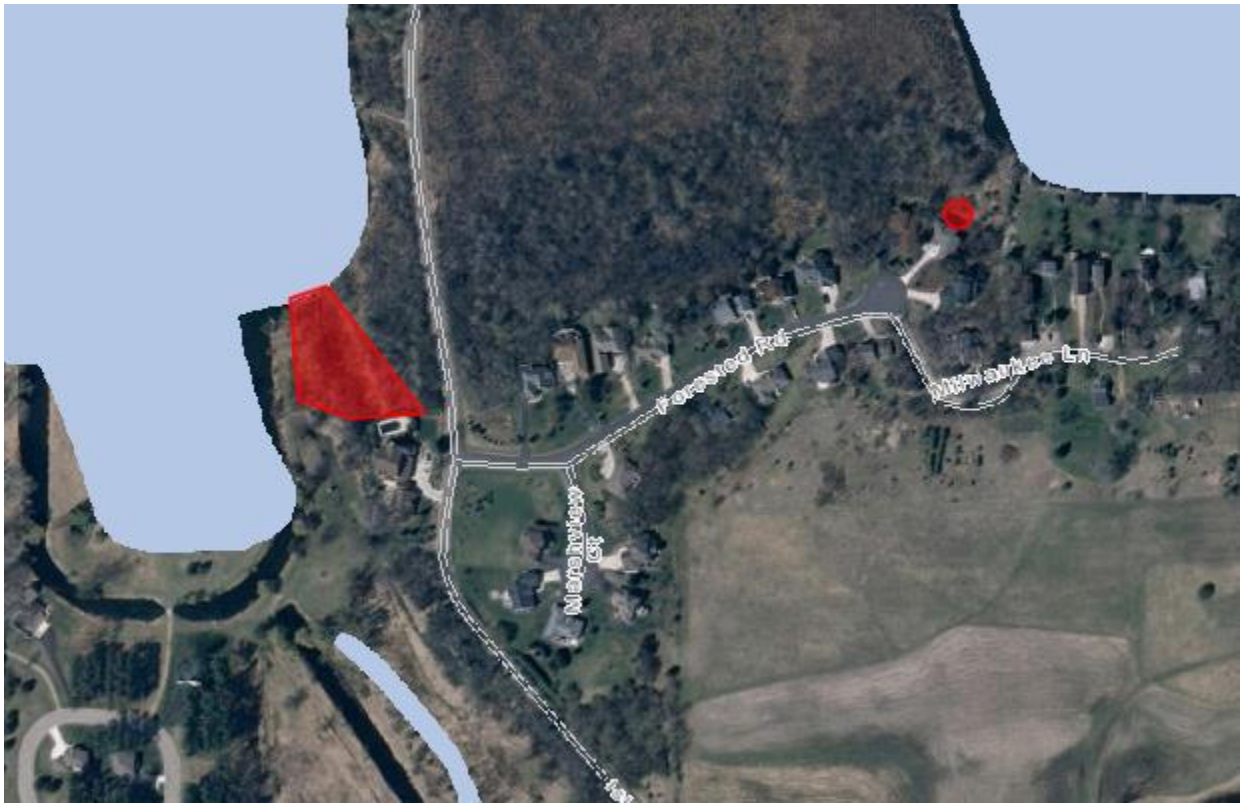
Phragmites, 2015

Phragmites 2015

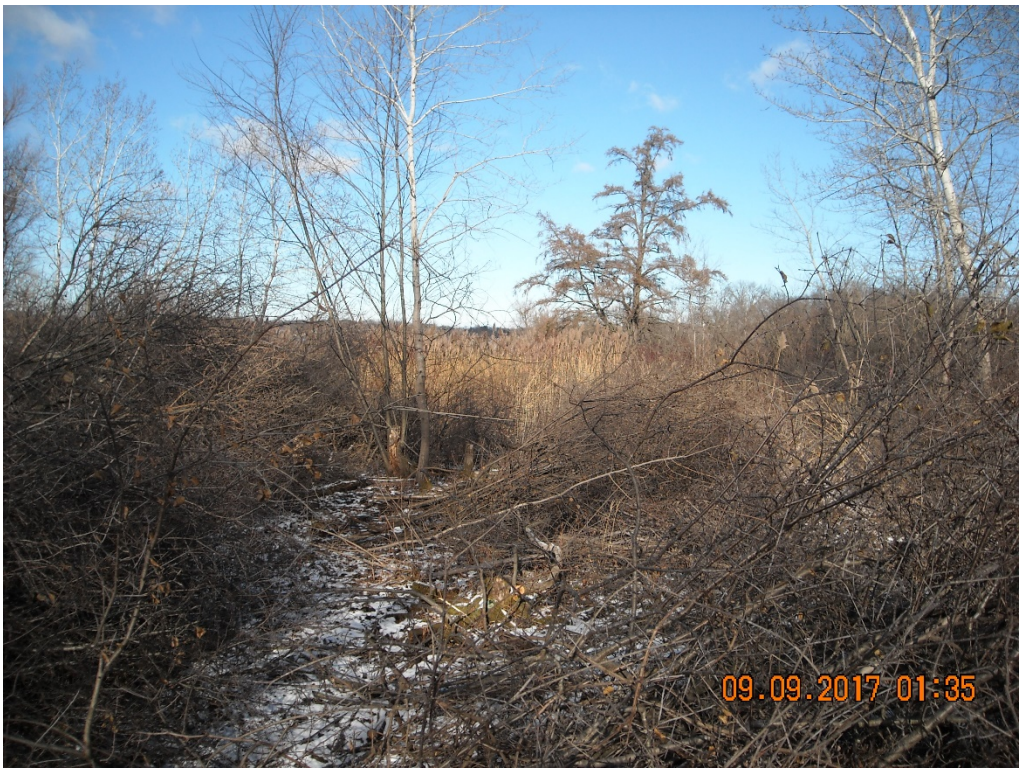


Manual removal 2015

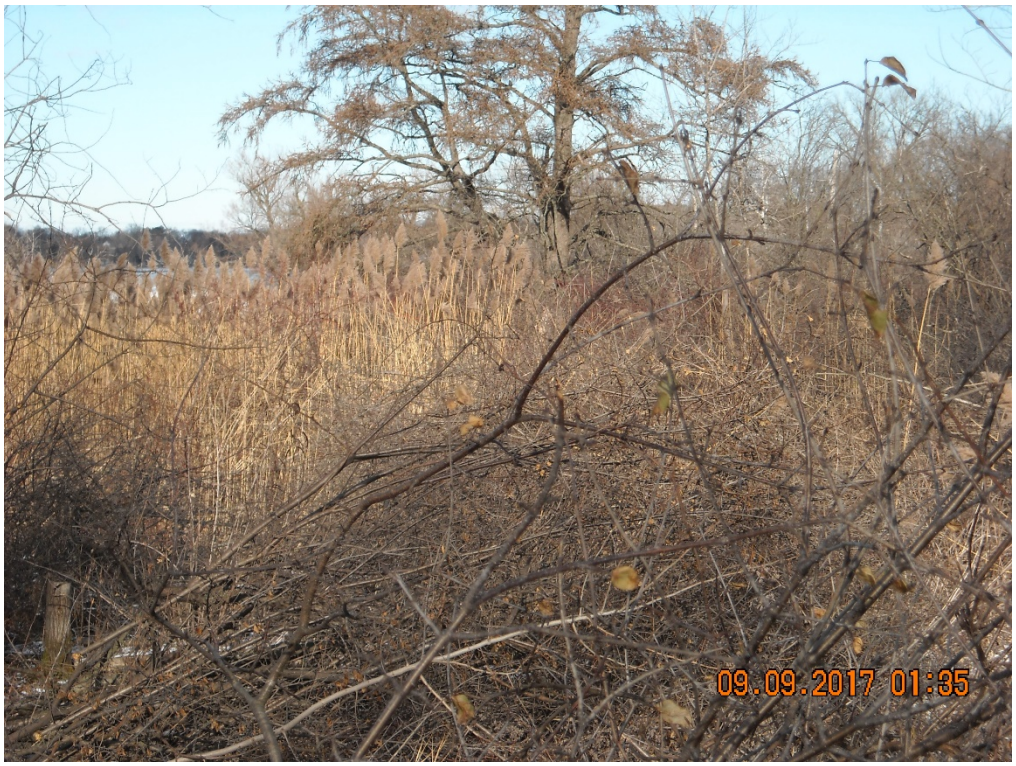
Phrag after herbicide treatment 2015



Two locations of Phrag known in 2016. The smaller site has been eradicated with no recurrence.



September 2017 – One of two main lobes



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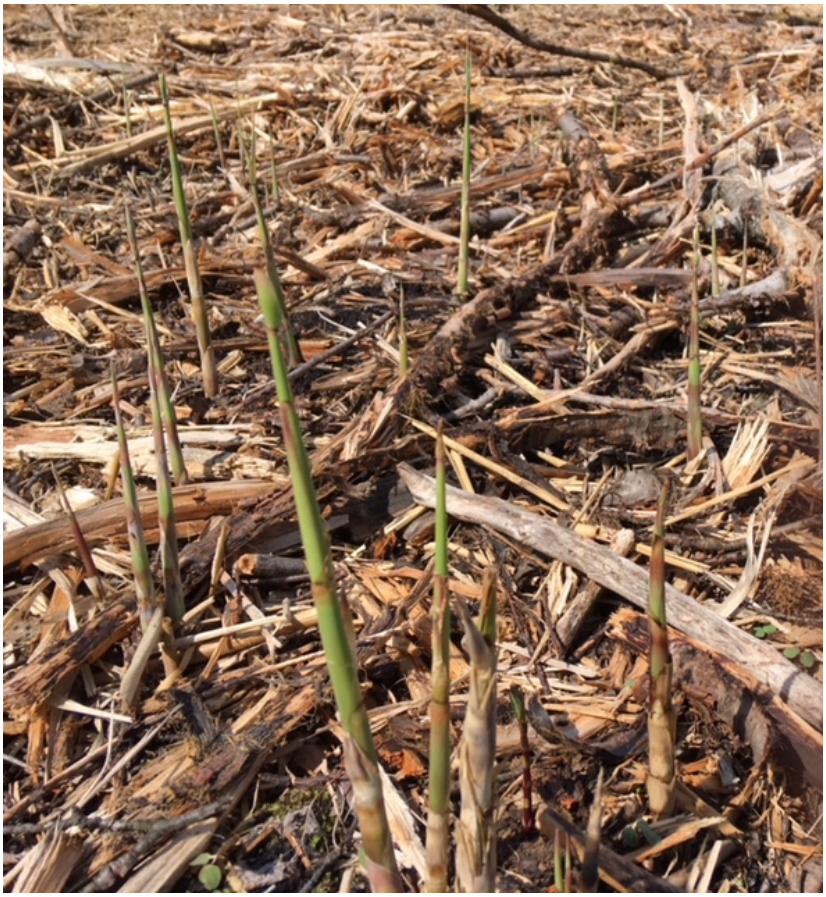
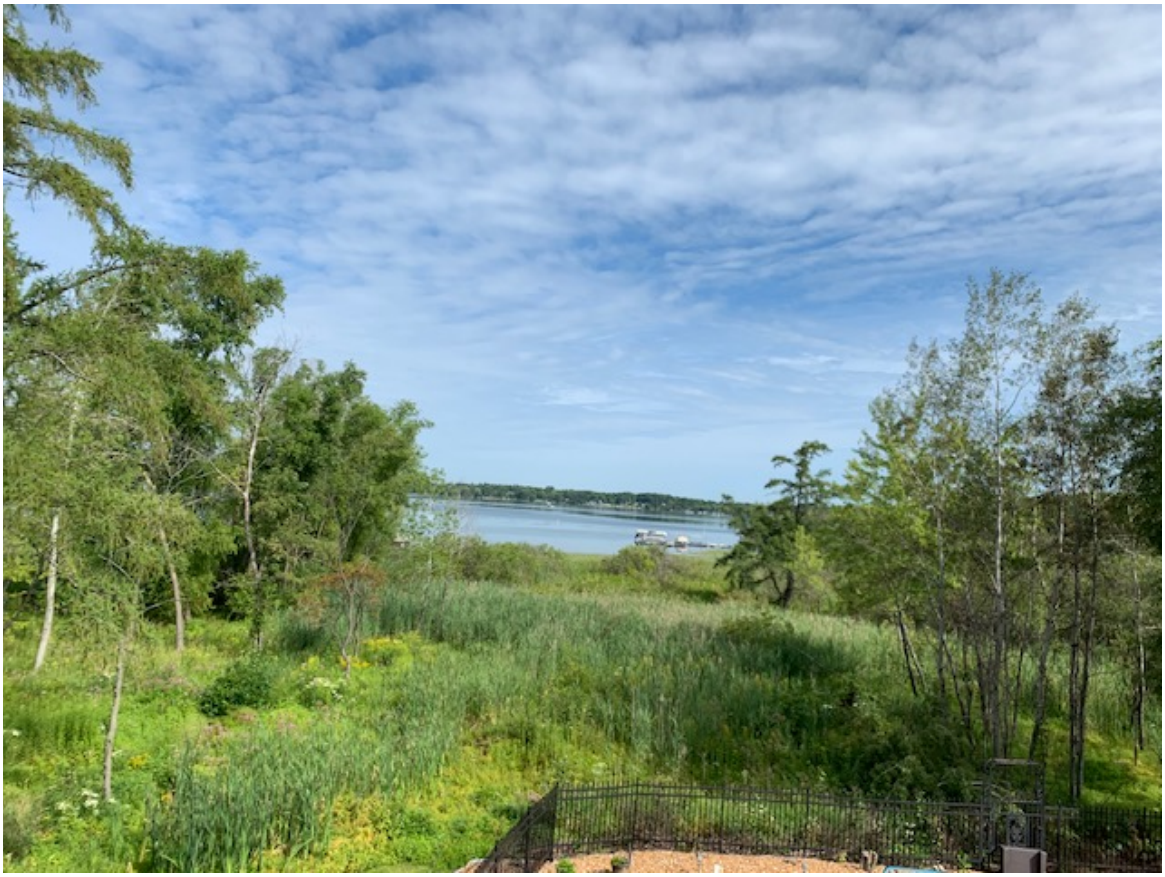
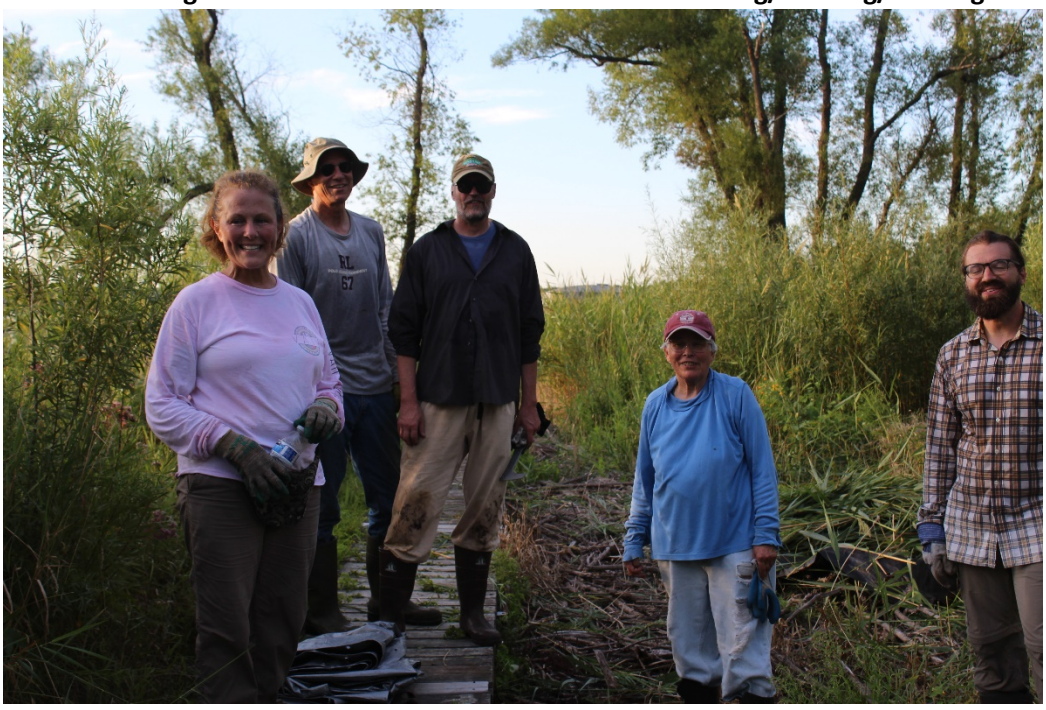


April 2018

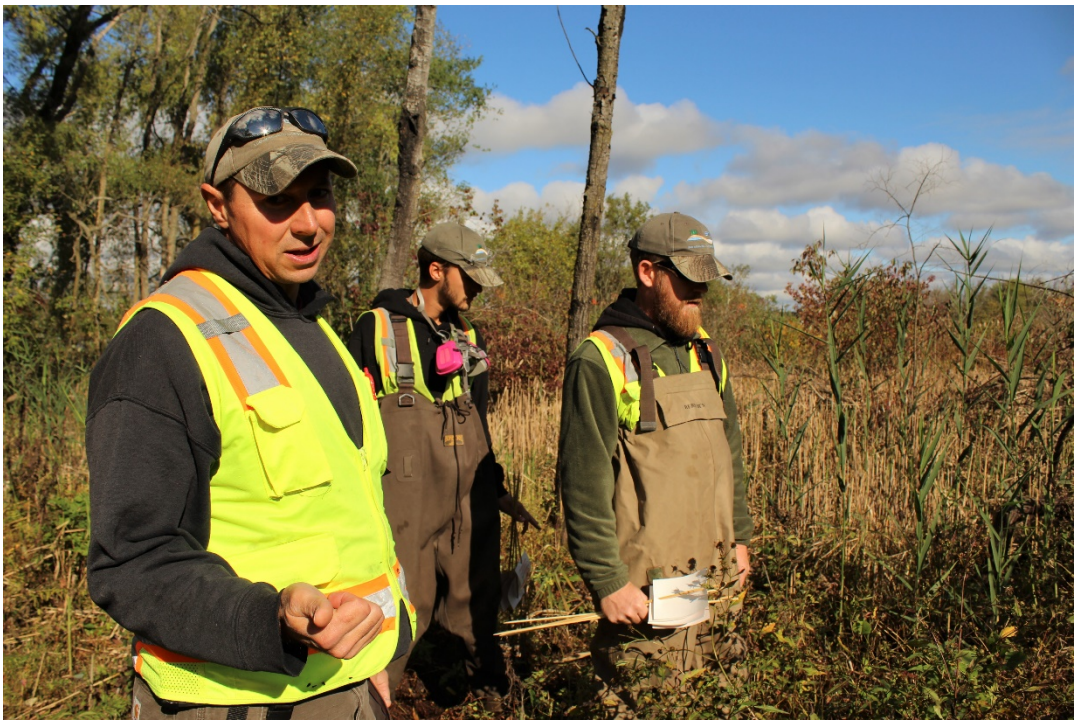
June 2019 Phrag



2019 Phrag eastern lobe from above before 2019's cutting/treating/burning



2019 Volunteers cutting in prep for Fall foliar treatment



2019 Imazapyr treatment of 10/4/19

This final report is meant to show the "program success and/or shortcomings" that AIRR-180-15 allowed Lake Ripley Management District to make toward its goal of managing the pioneering colony of Phragmites Australis on its shoreline. Because of a new approach being sought by the Board, and because of a significant staffing change, the District asks to be released from the remaining conditions of this grant and to close it. This decision is made with the recommendation of our DNR Water Resources Management Specialist. With thanks for your consideration,

Beth Gehred, Lake Manager, Lake Ripley Management District and the Lake Ripley Management District Board

Addenda:

2014 Map showing outlines of Phrag

2017 Map Showing outlines of Phrag

2019 Map showing outlines of Phrag

2019 Image "2019 exurbs of Phrag fringe"