

1414 West Hamilton Avenue P.O. Box 8 Eau Claire, WI 54702-0008

October 30, 2015

Ms. Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 888 First Street, NE Washington, DC 20426

Subject: <u>2015 Purple Loosestrife Monitoring Report</u> Holcombe Hydro (P-1982), Cornell Hydro (P-2639), Jim Falls Hydro (P-2491), Wissota Hydro (P-2567), Chippewa Falls Hydro (P-2440) and Dells Hydro (P-2670)

Dear Secretary:

Enclosed is the 2015 Purple Loosestrife Monitoring Report for the above-referenced hydro projects. Pursuant to the 2001 Lower Chippewa River Settlement Agreement, Xcel Energy (licensee) is required to annually monitor for the presence of loosestrife at each impoundment and eradicate pioneering plants on company-owned shoreline.

This year there was a marked decline in loosestrife infestation on Holcombe Flowage compared to 2014. The remaining projects with loosestrife infestations (Cornell, Jim Falls and Wissota) displayed comparable populations to previous years. Chippewa Falls Flowage and Dells Pond continue to remain free of loosestrife.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Matthew Miller of this office at (715) 737-1353 or at matthew.j.miller@xcelenergy.com.

Sincerely,

no lawa

William Zawacki Director, Hydro Plants

Enclosure

c: Nick Utrup - USFWS (via e-mail) Cheryl Laatsch – WDNR (via e-mail) Brian Guthman - LHIA (via e-mail) Jeanette Kelly – Beaver Creek Reserve (via e-mail)

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE ASSESSMENT – 2015

Dells Pond, Chippewa Falls Flowage, Lake Wissota, Old Abe Lake, Cornell Flowage, Lake Holcombe and Jim Falls Spillway Channel

Prepared for:

Xcel Energy P.O. Box 8 Eau Claire, WI 54702

Prepared by:



739 Hastings Street Traverse City, MI 49686

Principal contact: Christopher J. Turner Ph.: 715/829-3737 Fax: 715/874-5389 Email: cturner@glec.com

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INTRODUCTION

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria* L.) is an erect, herbaceous perennial of Eurasian origin that became established in the estuaries of northeastern North America by the early 1800's. Since then, this highly invasive species has spread throughout much of the United States, including most of Wisconsin's counties. As purple loosestrife expands its local distribution and becomes more widespread, it poses a serious threat to native emergent vegetation in shallow-water marshes and shorelines by displacing native food and cover plants in the waterways.

As part of the 2001 Lower Chippewa River Settlement Agreement, Xcel Energy agreed to monitor for the presence and spread of purple loosestrife at its six Lower Chippewa River hydroelectric projects. The surveys are to take place each year in the late summer when loosestrife blooms are easily detectable. Additionally, Xcel Energy committed to treating any small clusters of pioneering plants which occur on company-owned lands with an approved aquatic herbicide.

In 2010, Xcel Energy partnered with Beaver Creek Reserve to introduce European beetles (*Galerucella calmariensis* and/or *Galerucella pusilla*) into the main spillway channel adjacent to the Jim Falls Hydro. Beetles were again introduced into the same area during the summer of 2011. The beetles are commonly referred to as "Cella" foliage beetles or purple loosestrife bio-control beetles and they feed specifically on purple loosestrife plants. Their use has shown to be successful at decreasing the overall population of purple loosestrife. The locations and density of loosestrife within the Jim Falls spillway channel are therefore being monitored to determine the success of the beetle introduction.

METHODS

Following the same approach as previous surveys, an inspection of the entire shoreline of Dells Pond, Chippewa Falls Flowage, Lake Wissota, Old Abe Lake, Cornell Flowage and Lake Holcombe was performed by boat. The surveys were conducted between August 15 and September 20, 2015. The surveyor motored slowly around the shoreline looking for purple loosestrife plants. When loosestrife was discovered, the location was marked on a map and

coordinates were saved into a handheld GPS unit. Loosestrife infestations were classified as either "present" or "abundant" and marked on the map with a specific color. "Present" was defined as a few plants that sparsely inhabited the area but did not comprise a large percentage of the vegetation in that area. "Abundant" indicated that denser loosestrife growth existed and that the loosestrife made up a significant portion of the shoreline's overall vegetation.

By referencing the location of purple loosestrife plants with land ownership maps provided by Xcel Energy, the surveyor determined if the plants were on company-owned land. If the plants were on Xcel Energy land, and if it was only a minor infestation, the plants were sprayed with Rodeo[®] (an aquatic herbicide) from a backpack sprayer. From past work, it has been determined that herbicide application can be used as an effective treatment for small loosestrife populations, however, it is much less effective at controlling larger infestations. If major infestations were noted on Xcel Energy land, they were not to be treated, but documented for the possibility of a different eradication method in the future.

Using field maps, GPS coordinates, and notations made by the surveyor, the locations of purple loosestrife infestation were noted on the field maps and catalogued in a spreadsheet. The locations were then digitized onto GIS base maps (Wisconsin DNR 24K Hydrography version 6 and ESRI StreetMap USA). Locations of purple loosestrife are depicted on the maps using green for present and red for abundant. Due to the scale of the maps, locations covering less than 20 feet of shoreline are denoted by a dot while areas covering 20 feet of shoreline or greater are denoted by a line drawn to scale. Through the combined use of GPS, laser rangefinder, visual estimates, and GIS, the total length of shoreline infested by purple loosestrife was calculated for each flowage (Table 1). Appendix A includes survey maps for each flowage infested with loosestrife along with a corresponding catalog of each loosestrife location.

A survey of purple loosestrife was also conducted in the Jim Falls spillway channel adjacent to the downstream powerhouse. This area has been known to contain purple loosestrife in locally large numbers which prompted the introduction of purple loosestrife biocontrol beetles. A comprehensive mapping effort of the area began in 2010 to monitor the spread of loosestrife and the success of the beetle introduction. This portion of the fieldwork

was completed on foot using GPS and maps to identify the locations and densities of the loosestrife within the channel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of purple loosestrife locations and the total length of shoreline infested for each flowage over the last three years are summarized below in Table 1. The standard approach used to tabulate abundance and shoreline coverage allows for a direct comparison from year-to-year. When compared to the previous two years, this year's survey revealed a significant decrease in purple loosestrife infestation on Holcombe Flowage. However, the remainder of the impoundments with infestations (Cornell Flowage, Old Abe Flowage, and Lake Wissota) have shown little change over the past three years. Collectively, the amount of loosestrife infestation has decreased since 2014 by approximately 14 percent. Table 2 includes a summary of the total number of loosestrife infestations and the total length of shoreline infested for all six hydro projects over the past three years.

	Number of purple loosestrife locations				Shoreline Affected (ft)							
		Present			Abundan	t	Present			Abundant		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Holcombe	151	185	167	0	0	1	2113	1685	1193	0	0	137
Cornell	16	18	25	1	1	0	49	67	151	90	60	0
Old Abe	26	13	27	0	0	0	142	85	134	0	0	0
Wissota	10	3	5	0	0	0	23	9	21	0	0	0
Chippewa Falls	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dells	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1. Summary of Purple Loosestrife Infestations onSix Lower Chippewa River Hydroelectric Projects, 2013-2015

Table 2. Total Purple Loosestrife Infestations onSix Lower Chippewa River Hydroelectric Projects, 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015
Total number of loosetrife points at Impoundments	204	220	225
Total shoreline affected in Impoundments	2417	1906	1636

There was no purple loosestrife found on the Chippewa Falls Flowage in 2015 which is consistent with findings from previous years. Dells Pond was also absent from any loosestrife infestation this year as has been the case for the last six years.

The number of purple loosestrife locations found on Lake Wissota increased from three in 2014 to five in 2015, but was as high as 10 in 2013. These locations are all minor infestations with small plant clumps at each location (see map of Lake Wissota). Total shoreline infested on Lake Wissota increased from 9 feet in 2014 to 21 feet in 2015, but was as high as 23 feet in 2013.

Holcombe Flowage contained the most purple loosestrife among the six impoundments surveyed. There were 167 locations categorized as present and one location categorized as abundant (see Holcombe Flowage Map 1). Both the number of infestations and amount of shoreline affected decreased significantly from the previous year's survey. While a few new plants were found during the survey, the majority of the infested areas have been noted in previous years. New infestation is generally associated with areas where the native vegetation has been disturbed. This disturbance can come from urbanization (clearing for home sites, swimming areas or fishing areas), road improvements, or erosion. It is also common to have plants grow only during select years. This may be the case on Holcombe Flowage, with new plants growing this year, while previously observed plants did not.

The majority of plants on Lake Holcombe were again found in an area on and around Pine Island and along State Highway 27. A comparison to the 2014 survey shows a large degree of similarity in the overall loosestrife populations in this area (see Holcombe Map 2). Several small infestations were again found just to the east of the State Highway 27 Bridge. This area had a similar degree of infestation during last year's survey. There was only one area of abundant plant growth documented in 2015. This site was classified as abundant in 2012 and as present in both 2013 and 2014, indicating a general consistency in the number of plants in this area. No purple loosestrife was found in the Pine Lake or Cranberry Lake areas.

Several plant clumps were found scattered along the north and south shores of the main flowage (see Holcombe Map 3 and 4) with many of these plants having been documented in the past. The large islands near the south shore of the main flowage also contain several plants. Overall, there was a slight increase in plant density in the main basin.

The upstream reach of the flowage (see Holcombe Maps 5 and 6) also contains a number of purple loosestrife plants that have been noted in past surveys. The overall plant density in these areas was slightly less than what was documented in 2014.

In total, approximately 1,330 feet of shoreline was found to contain purple loosestrife on Lake Holcombe compared to 1,685 feet in 2014. As stated above, all infestations but one were classified as present.

Cornell Flowage included 25 infestations classified as present and no locations classified as abundant (see map of Cornell Flowage). Many of these locations had been noted in surveys from previous years. The infested area located just upstream from the State Highway 64 Bridge was classified as present this year. This same area was classified as abundant from 2012-2014. While the overall number of loosestrife locations and total amount of shoreline affected increased somewhat from 2014, it is similar to 2013, indicating a relatively small amount of change over the past several years.

Twenty-seven areas of loosestrife infestation were found on Old Abe Lake (see map of Old Abe Flowage) all of which were classified as present. Although this represents an increase in plant abundance from last year, it is very similar to the degree of infestation found in 2013. Most of the locations consisted of single plants or a few plant clumps, many of which had been documented in past surveys. The largest increase in loosestrife abundance occurred in an area in the upper part of the flowage where the 2013 survey noted a large decrease in plant growth. The total amount of shoreline infested by purple loosestrife this year on Old Abe Lake was approximately 134 feet. This compares to 85 feet in 2014, and 142 feet in 2013.

The minimum flow channel at Jim Falls Hydro remains infested with a relatively high concentration of purple loosestrife plants. A significant decrease in the number of plants was noted in 2012 followed by a rebound in 2013 and 2014. This year, the degree of infestation decreased slightly (Table 3). Loosestrife was found scattered throughout the channel, with the lower third of the channel being moderately infested (see maps of Jim Falls Spillway Channel). The area of greatest concentration occurs just upstream from the County Highway Y Bridge (see Jim Falls Spillway map 2). The coverage of loosestrife in this area has decreased from approximately 11,064 square feet in 2014 to 9,461 square feet in 2015 (Table 4). The loosestrife is scattered throughout the area and appears to be less dense overall than

in previous years. The total number of loosestrife infestations in the spillway channel remained the same as in 2014 (42 total locations), however, coverage decreased slightly from the previous year. Collectively, these locations amounted to 217 feet of infested shoreline versus 239 feet in 2014. Most of these locations were comprised of small plant clumps infesting between one and ten feet of shoreline, with a few more significant areas of infestation. Five years have passed since the introduction of the bio-control beetles. While it is difficult to make a determination as to their success, the fact that the density of loosestrife in the lower area of the spillway channel is continuing to decrease, and the fact that loosestrife infestation in the remaining portion of the channel appears to be stabilizing are encouraging.

	2013	2014	2015
Total number of loosetrife points at Jim Falls Spillway	36	42	42
Sq feet of Fim Falls Spillway infestation near Hwy Y	16,165	11,064	9,461
Total other shoreline affected at Jim Falls Spillway	153	239	217

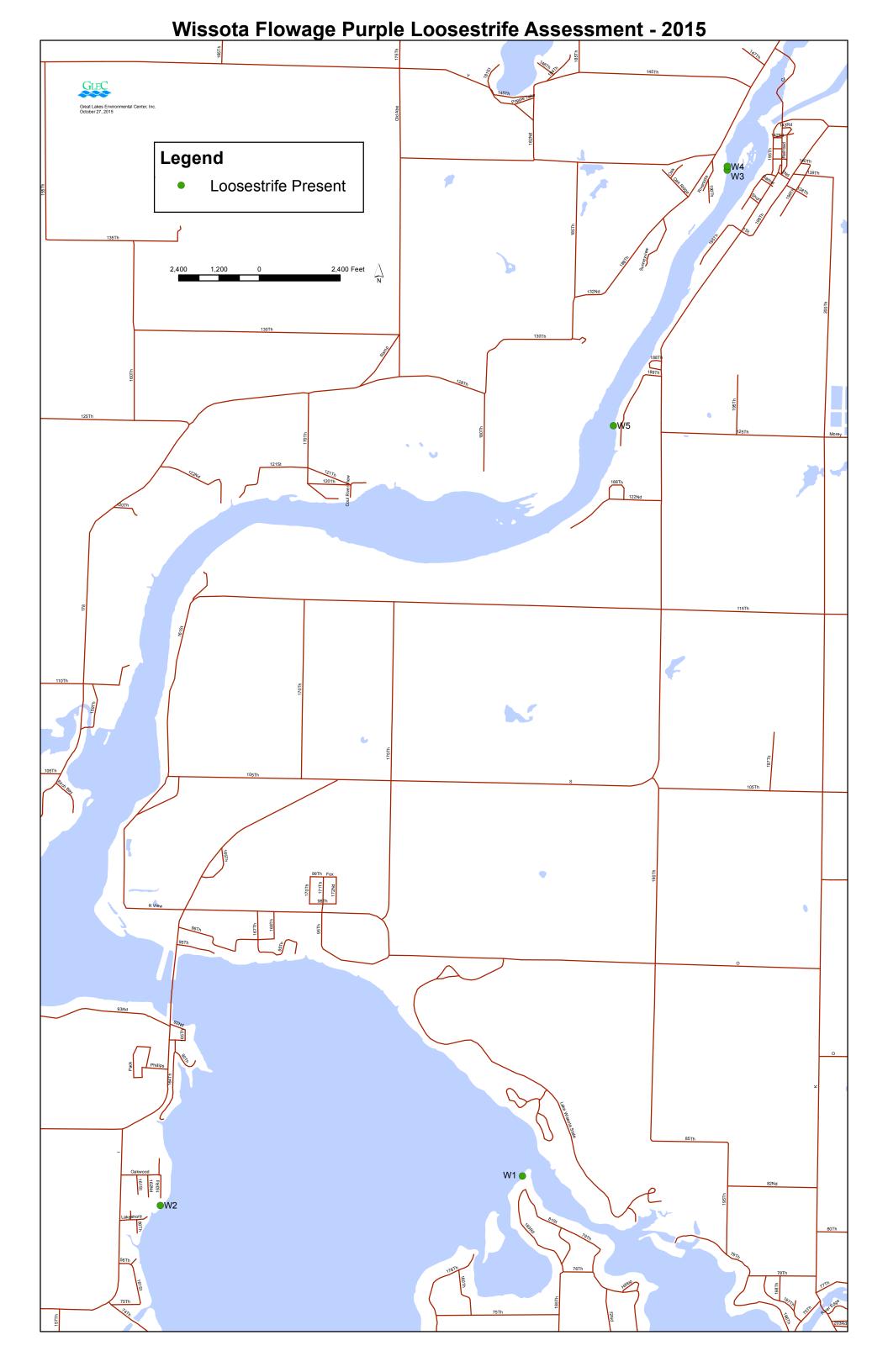
Table 3. Comparison of Purple Loosestrife Infestations in
Jim Falls Spillway Channel - 2013 - 2015

Table 4. Summary of Purple Loosestrife Infestations in
Jim Falls Spillway Channel – 2015

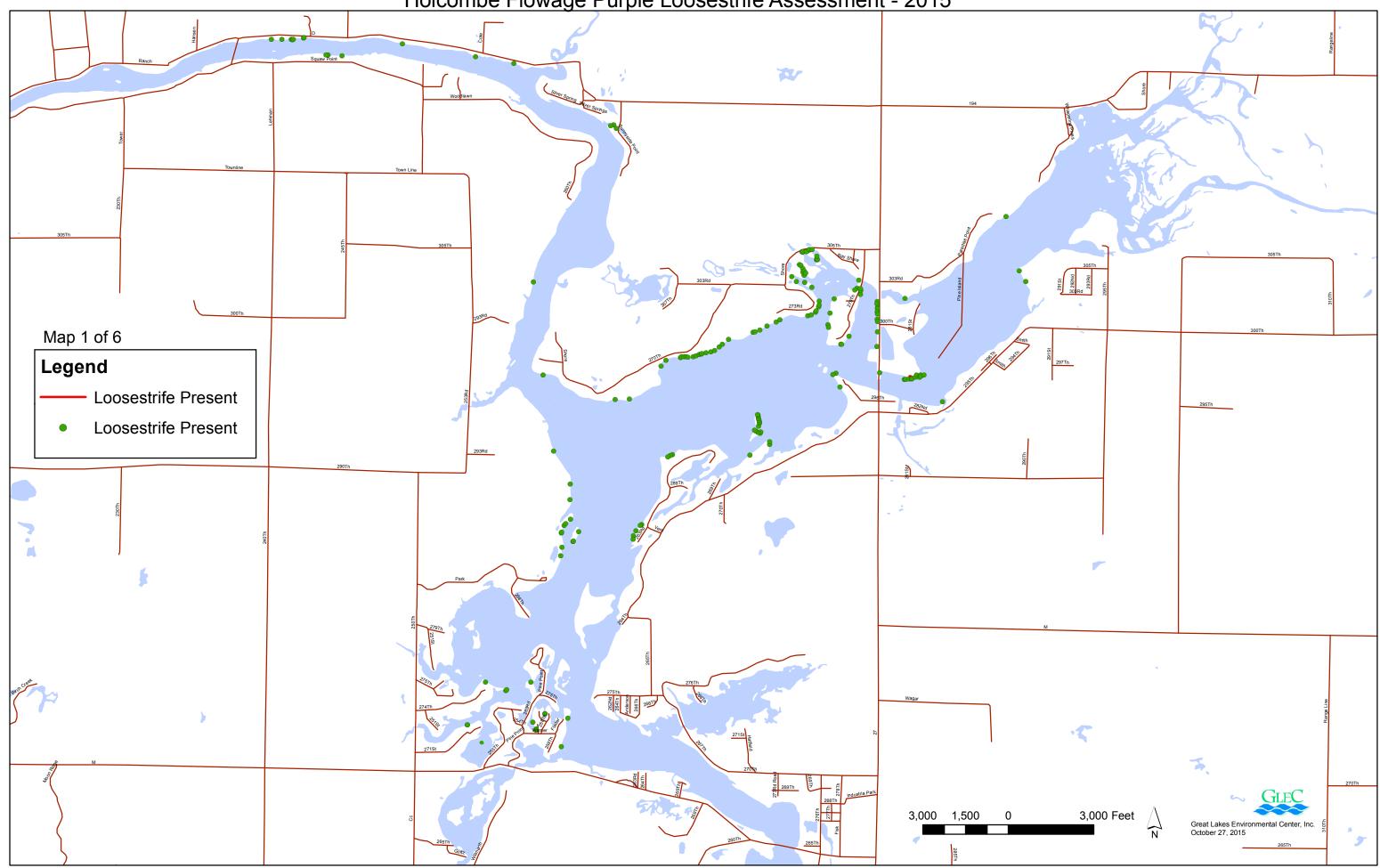
Мар	Abundant/		Coverage		
point	Present	# PLANTS	type	Area c	overed
JF 1	Present	Multiple	Aerial	9,461	
JF 2	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 3	Present	Multiple	Point		ft
JF 4	Present	Multiple	Point	10	
JF 5	Present	Multiple	Point		ft
JF 6	Present	Multiple	Point	10	
JF 7	Present	Multiple	Point	12	
JF 8	Present	Multiple	Point		ft
JF 9	Present	Multiple	Point	20	
JF 10	Present	Single	Point	2	
JF 11	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 12	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 13	Present	Multiple	Point	7	ft
JF 14	Present	Multiple	Point	9	
JF 15	Present	Single	Point	1	
JF 16	Present	Single	Point	1	ft
JF 17	Present	Multiple	Point	12	
JF 18	Present	Multiple	Point	6	
JF 19	Present	Single	Point	-	ft
JF 20	Present	Single	Point	4	
JF 21	Present	Single	Point	2	ft
JF 22	Present	Single	Point	1	ft
JF 23	Present	Single	Point	2	
JF 24	Present	Multiple	Point		ft
JF 25	Present	Multiple	Point		ft
JF 26	Present	Multiple	Point	6	
JF 27	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 28	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 29	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 30	Present	Single	Point	3	ft
JF 31	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 32	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 33	Present	Single	Point	1	ft
JF 34	Present	Single	Point	3	ft
JF 35	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 36	Present	Multiple	Point		ft
JF 37	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 38	Present	Single	Point	5	ft
JF 39	Present	Multiple	Point	10	
JF 40	Present	Single	Point		ft
JF 41	Present	Multiple	Point	14	ft
JF 42	Present	Single	Point	3	ft

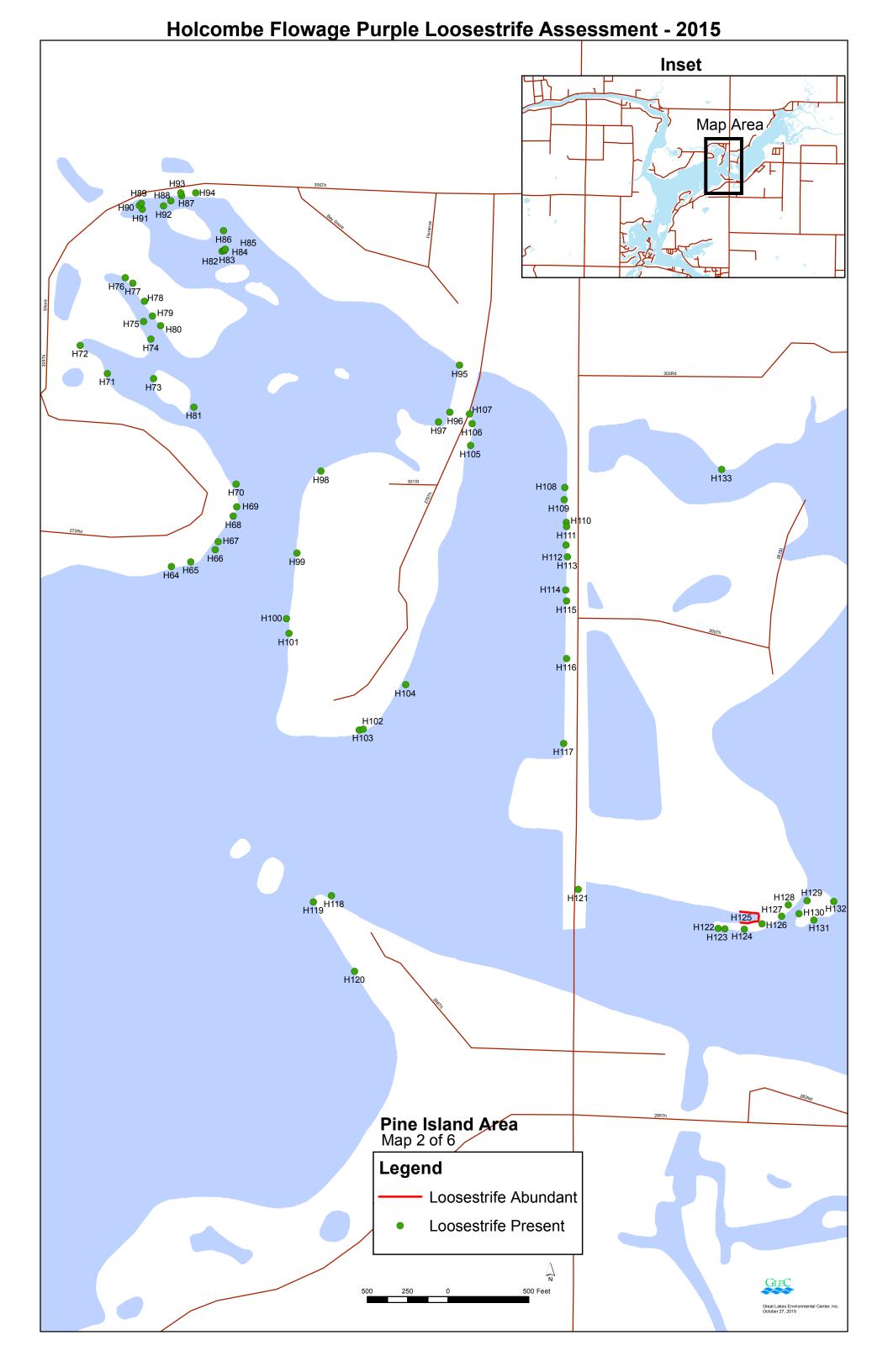
Appendix A

Survey Maps and Catalog of Purple Loosestrife Locations

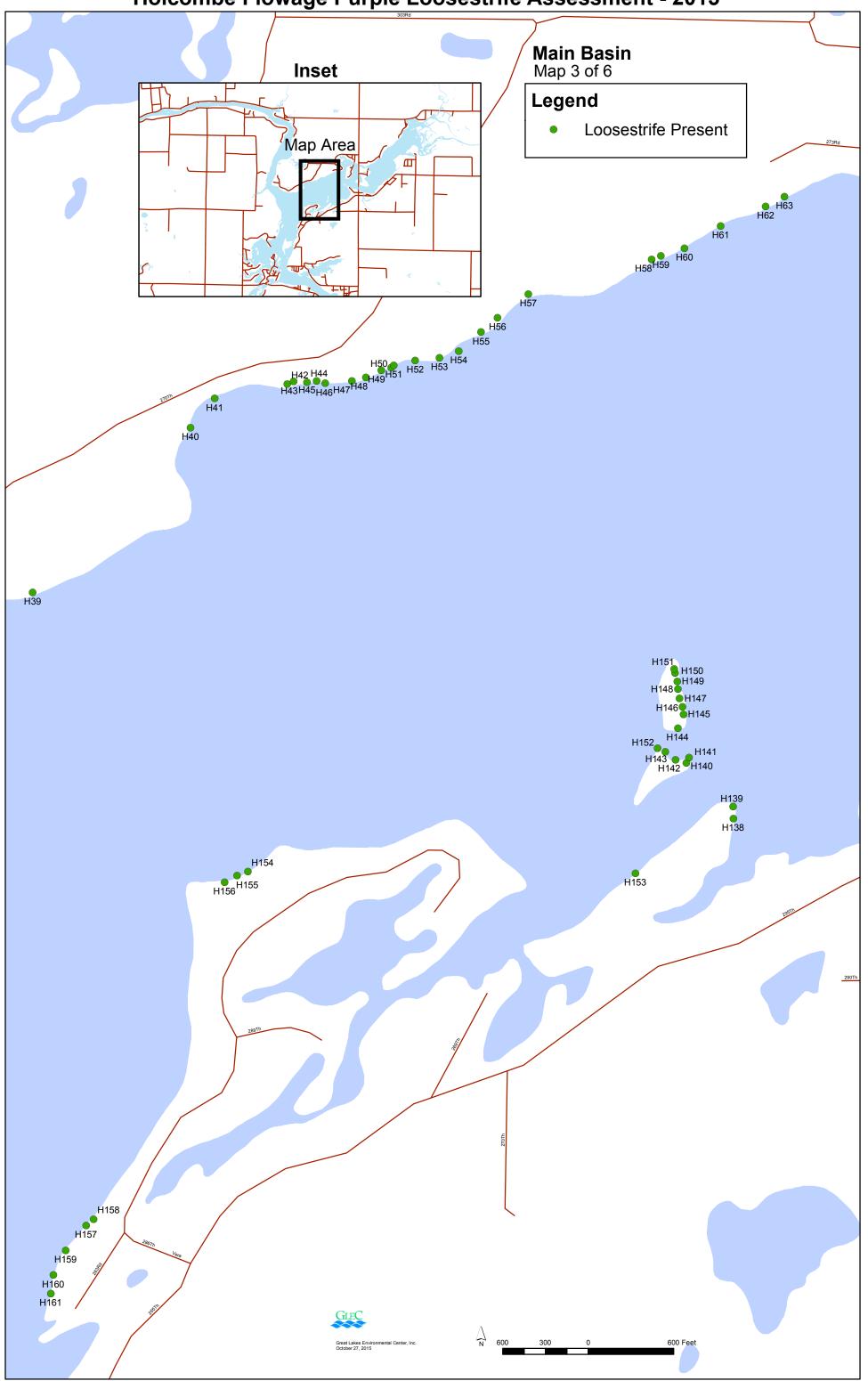


Holcombe Flowage Purple Loosestrife Assessment - 2015

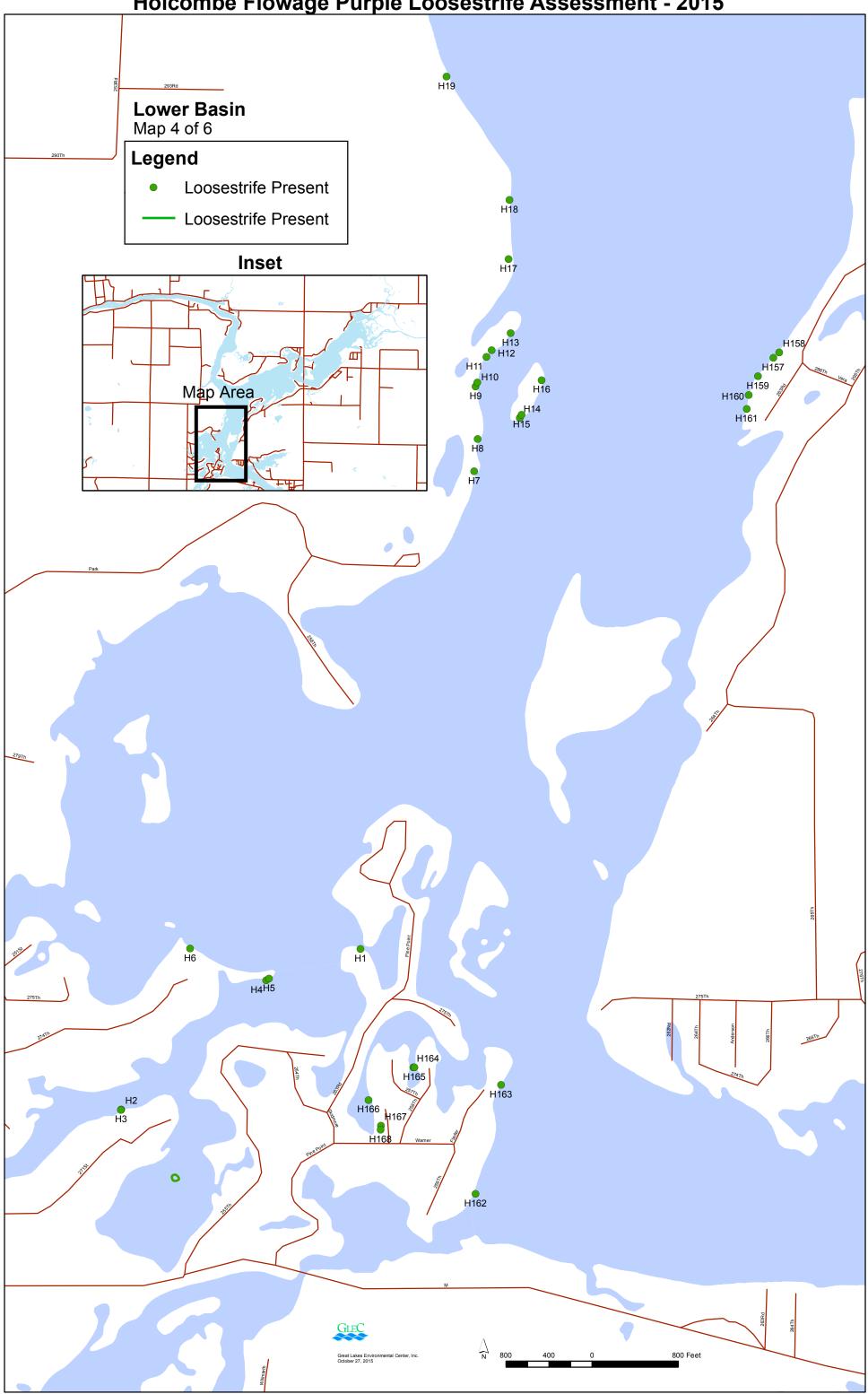


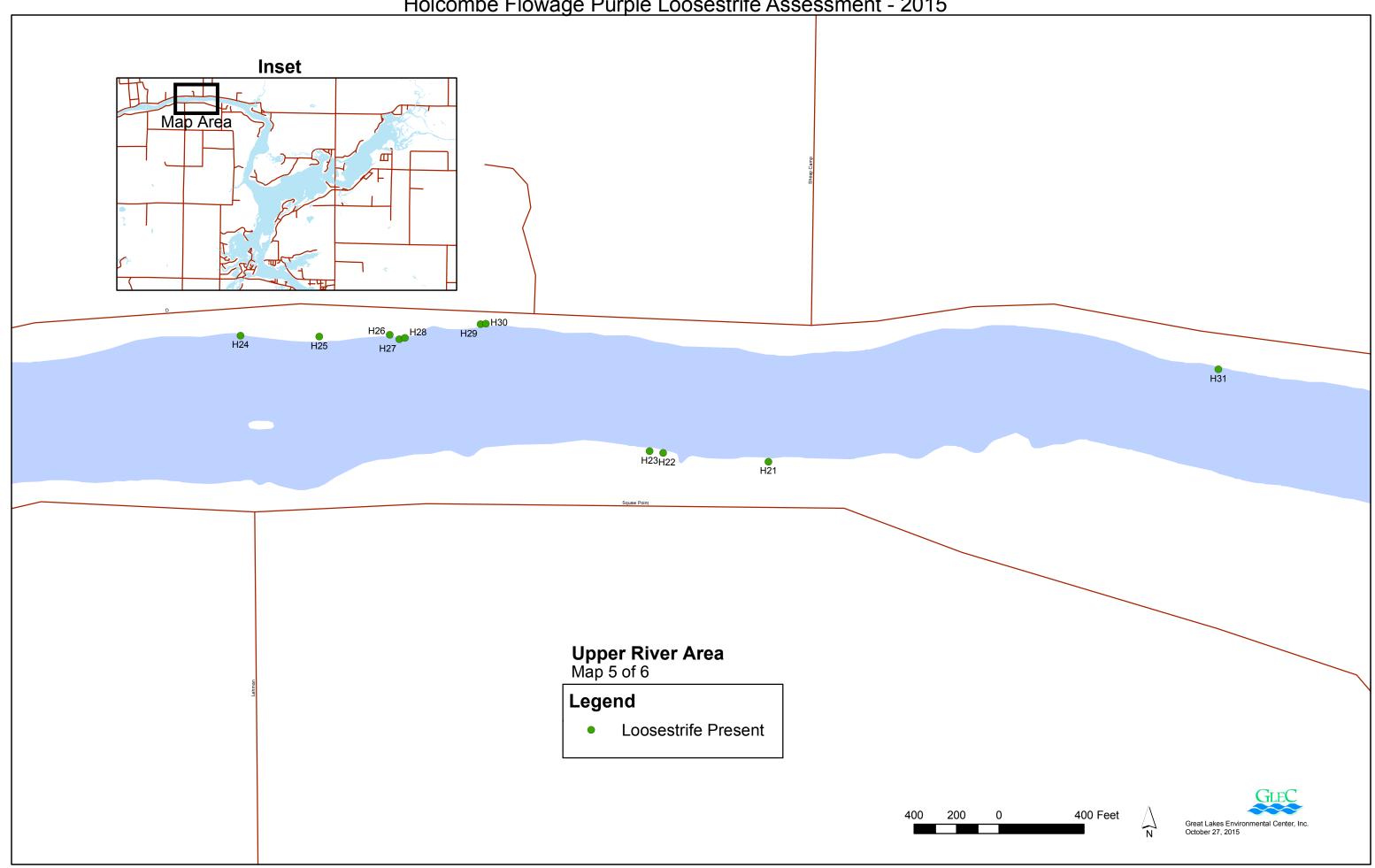


Holcombe Flowage Purple Loosestrife Assessment - 2015

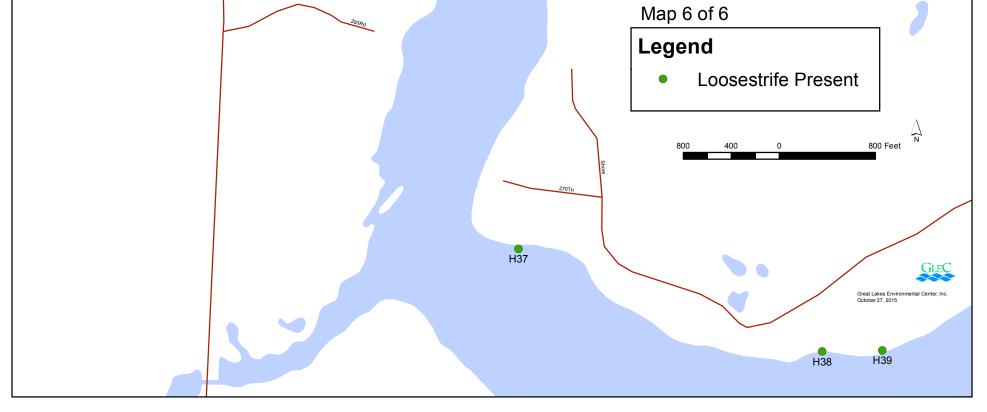




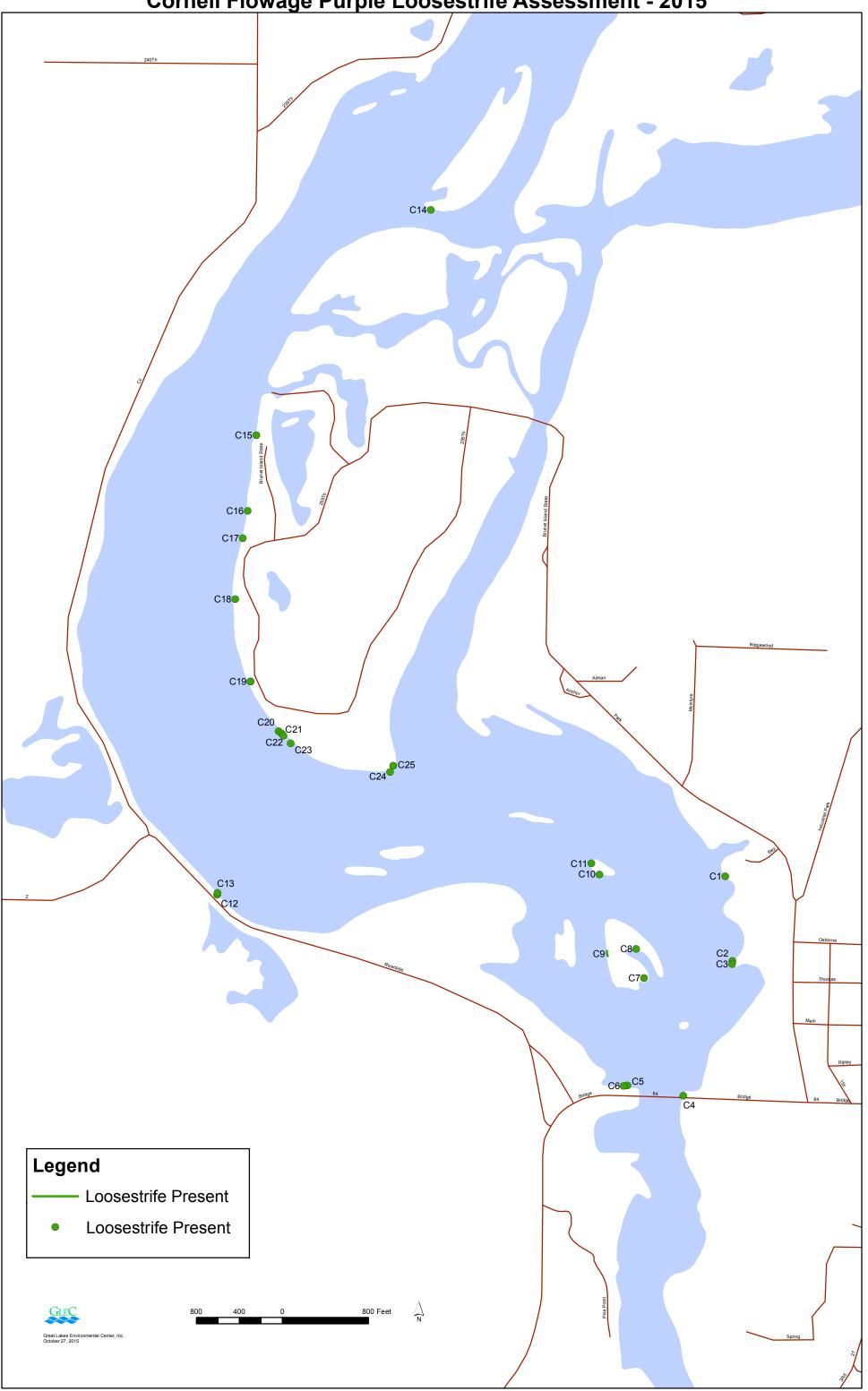


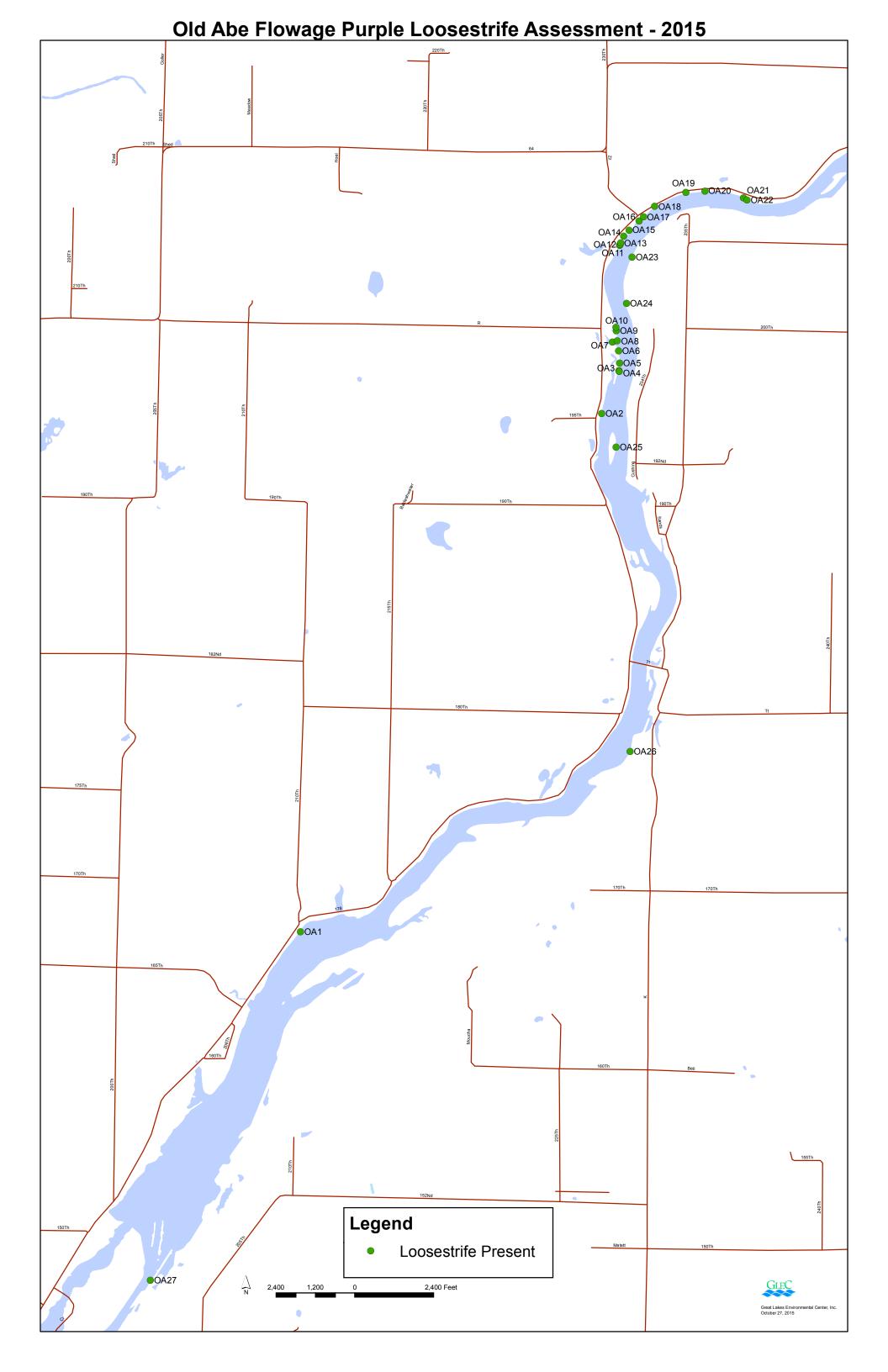


Holcombe Flowage Purple Loosestrife Assessment 2015 H32 H33 H34 H35 H36 Inset ш Map Area H20 Lower River Area



Cornell Flowage Purple Loosestrife Assessment - 2015





Jim Falls Spillway Channel Purple Loosestrife Assessment – 2015 (Map 1 of 4)



Jim Falls Spillway Channel Purple Loosestrife Assessment – 2015 (Map 2 of 4)





Jim Falls Spillway Channel Purple Loosestrife Assessment – 2015 (Map 4 of 4)



XCEL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE LOCATIONS 2015 LAKE WISSOTA

Location	Degree of	Single /	Coverage
#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)
W1	Present	Single	3
W2	Present	Single	3
W3	Present	Multiple	7
W4	Present	Multiple	4
W5	Present	Single	4

XCEL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE LOCATIONS 2015 HOLCOMBE FLOWAGE

Location	Degree of	Single /	Coverage	Location	Degree of	Single /	Coverage
#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)	#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)
H1	Present	Single	2	H85	Present	Single	2
H2	Present	Multiple	190	H86	Present	Multiple	8
H3	Present	Single	3	H87	Present	Multiple	8
H4	Present	Single	1	H88	Present	Multiple	20
H5	Present	Single	2	H89	Present	Multiple	10
H6	Present	Single	4	H90	Present	Multiple	6
H7	Present	Single	1	H91	Present	Multiple	16
H8	Present	Multiple	12	H92	Present	Multiple	15
H9	Present	Multiple	3	H93	Present	Multiple	14
H10	Present	Single	1	H94	Present	Multiple	7
H11	Present	Single	2	H95	Present	Single	5
H12	Present	Single	1	H96	Present	Multiple	5
H13	Present	Single	1	H97	Present	Multiple	10
H14	Present	Multiple	4	H98	Present	Single	1
H15	Present	Single	2	H99	Present	Single	5
H16	Present	Single	2	H100	Present	Multiple	10
H17	Present	Single	2	H101	Present	Single	4
H18	Present	Single	2	H102	Present	Multiple	8
H19	Present	Single	1	H103	Present	Multiple	10
H20	Present	Multiple	4	H104	Present	Single	1
H21	Present	Multiple	3	H105	Present	Single	1
H22	Present	Single	4	H106	Present	Single	5
H23	Present	Multiple	5	H107	Present	Single	3
H24	Present	Single	1	H108	Present	Single	2
H25	Present	Multiple	8	H109	Present	Single	3
H26	Present	Multiple	10	H110	Present	Single	5
H27	Present	Single	1	H111	Present	Single	2
H28	Present	Single	1	H112	Present	Multiple	8
H29	Present	Single	1	H113	Present	Multiple	14
H30	Present	Single	2	H114	Present	Single	1
H31	Present	Single	2	H115	Present	Multiple	20
H32	Present	Single	3	H116	Present	Single	5
H33	Present	Single	2	H117	Present	Multiple	7
H34	Present	Single	3	H118	Present	Single	5
H35	Present	Single	4	H119	Present	Single	3
H36	Present	Single	3	H120	Present	Multiple	6
H37	Present	Single	4	H121	Present	Multiple	10
H38	Present	Single	1	H122	Abundant	Multiple	137
H39	Present	Single	2	H123	Present	Single	3
H40	Present	Single	2	H124	Present	Multiple	10
H41	Present	Single	3	H125	Present	Multiple	8
H42	Present	Multiple	8	H126	Present	Single	4
H43	Present	Multiple	12	H127	Present	Multiple	7
H44	Present	Multiple	2	H128	Present	Multiple	5
H45	Present	Single	1	H129	Present	Multiple	6
H46	Present	Multiple	4	H130	Present	Multiple	20
H47	Present	Multiple	10	H131	Present	Single	3
H48	Present	Multiple	5	H132	Present	Single	3
H49	Present	Multiple	10	H133	Present	Multiple	5
H50	Present	Multiple	4	H134	Present	Single	3
H51	Present	Single	2	H135	Present	Multiple	3
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XCEL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE LOCATIONS 2015 HOLCOMBE FLOWAGE

Location	Degree of	Single /	Coverage	Location	Degree of	Single /	Coverage
#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)	#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)
H52	Present	Multiple	5	H136	Present	Single	4
H53	Present	Single	4	H137	Present	Single	4
H54	Present	Multiple	4	H138	Present	Multiple	6
H55	Present	Multiple	4	H139	Present	Multiple	8
H56	Present	Single	1	H140	Present	Multiple	12
H57	Present	Multiple	10	H141	Present	Multiple	6
H58	Present	Multiple	6	H142	Present	Multiple	2
H59	Present	Single	2	H143	Present	Multiple	5
H60	Present	Single	1	H144	Present	Multiple	12
H61	Present	Multiple	5	H145	Present	Single	2
H62	Present	Multiple	12	H146	Present	Multiple	10
H63	Present	Multiple	7	H147	Present	Multiple	12
H64	Present	Multiple	12	H148	Present	Multiple	12
H65	Present	Multiple	5	H149	Present	Multiple	16
H66	Present	Multiple	8	H150	Present	Single	2
H67	Present	Multiple	4	H151	Present	Multiple	16
H68	Present	Multiple	9	H152	Present	Multiple	8
H69	Present	Multiple	7	H153	Present	Single	4
H70	Present	Multiple	5	H154	Present	Single	2
H71	Present	Single	2	H155	Present	Multiple	4
H72	Present	Single	6	H156	Present	Multiple	3
H73	Present	Multiple	15	H157	Present	Multiple	6
H74	Present	Single	3	H158	Present	Multiple	5
H75	Present	Single	3	H159	Present	Single	2
H76	Present	Multiple	8	H160	Present	Multiple	7
H77	Present	Multiple	30	H161	Present	Multiple	12
H78	Present	Multiple	25	H162	Present	Multiple	5
H79	Present	Multiple	50	H163	Present	Single	5
H80	Present	Multiple	4	H164	Present	Single	2
H81	Present	Single	4	H165	Present	Multiple	6
H82	Present	Multiple	5	H166	Present	Multiple	4
H83	Present	Single	2	H167	Present	Single	2
H84	Present	Single	3	H168	Present	Multiple	8

XCEL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE LOCATIONS 2015 CORNELL FLOWAGE

Location	Degree of	Single /	Coverage
#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)
C1	Present	Single	3
C2	Present	Single	1
C3	Present	Single	3
C4	Present	Multiple	6
C5	Present	Single	4
C6	Present	Single	2
C7	Present	Multiple	10
C8	Present	Single	3
C9	Present	Multiple	60
C10	Present	Single	2
C11	Present	Single	1
C12	Present	Multiple	6
C13	Present	Multiple	8
C14	Present	Single	4
C15	Present	Single	2
C16	Present	Single	3
C17	Present	Multiple	6
C18	Present	Single	3
C19	Present	Single	5
C20	Present	Single	2
C21	Present	Single	1
C22	Present	Single	1
C23	Present	Single	1
C24	Present	Multiple	13
C25	Present	Single	1

XCEL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE LOCATIONS 2015 OLD ABE FLOWAGE

Location	Degree of Single /		Coverage
#	Infestation	Multiple	(ft)
OA1	Present	Single	4
OA2	Present	Single	2
OA3	Present	Multiple	8
OA4	Present	Multiple	6
OA5	Present	Single	3
OA6	Present	Single	3
OA7	Present	Multiple	12
OA8	Present	Multiple	14
OA9	Present	Single	3
OA10	Present	Multiple	12
OA11	Present	Single	3
OA12	Present	Single	3
OA13	Present	Multiple	10
OA14	Present	Multiple	4
OA15	Present	Single	1
OA16	Present	Multiple	4
OA17	Present	Multiple	5
OA18	Present	Multiple	3
OA19	Present	Multiple	5
OA20	Present	Single	2
OA21	Present	Single	2
OA22	Present	Single	1
OA23	Present	Single	2
OA24	Present	Single	2
OA25	Present	Multiple	14
OA26	Present	Single	3
OA27	Present	Single	3