

2016 “Fight The Phrag!”



Introduction

This is the second year for attacking *Phragmites* along the Collingwood shoreline. The wetland, west of Sunset Point Park and east of Heritage Drive was the specific area the Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation targeted. It is publically owned land and *Phragmites* is making an inroad into this unique and rare coastal wetland.

Coastal Wetlands on the west side of Georgian Bay are few and comprise sparse overburden underlying sedimentary bedrock. At the shoreline the bedrock is exposed and slopes at a shallow angle into

Water level fluctuations (daily, seasonally and long-term cycles) are essential components of these wetlands. The vegetation and wildlife found in them have adapted to water level changes and the relatively nutrient-poor regimes associated with this type of coastal wetland.

Colonization of invasive species, such as *Phragmites*, must be viewed as a significant threat to these wetlands as they thrive in this type of habitat.

The map following shows the stands of *Phragmites* found to date. There are four major stands with many smaller but not yet established stands.



Main Cutting Areas
(Stands 1 & 2 on land, Stands 3 & 4 in the water)

Georgian Bay Forever with the NVCA and BMWTF organized a workshop this spring to familiarize environmental organizations and the public on the impact *Phragmites* is having on our watershed.

Mayor Cooper who sits on the “Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative” spoke on the overall concern of the impact of invasive species in the Great Lakes and asked for our support in the fight.

Funding has been obtained from Environment Canada’s Lake Simcoe/Southern Georgian Bay Clean Up Fund and the Royal Bank’s RBC Blue Water Fund. The program is funded for the remainder of this year but funding needs to continue if we are to be successful in our “Fight the Phrag” program.

Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) is providing the oversight and equipment to help in the “Fight the Phrag” program. Chelsea Deakin of NVCA is our contact person and David Featherstone, Manager of NVCA’s Water Quality Programs and Brittany Hope of NVCA who were involved in leading last year’s program provided guidance. Their assistance and leadership is essential to the “Fight the Phrag” program

Cutting and Dragging

On August 6th 25 volunteers came out to continue the Fight started last year. By 12:00 p.m. the four cutting locations had been cut and the cuttings taken to drop off points where the Town’s Parks Department will provide staff and vehicles to pick up and transport the cut *Phragmites* to the Simcoe County Compost Facility for composting.



Piling Stand 3 *Phragmites* on Tarps for Hauling to Drop Off point



Phragmites Stand 4
(Note dense vegetation)



Cutting at Stand 4
(Note water depth)



Stand 4 Cut and being Cleaned up

Need to cut as low in the water as possible so flooding of the hollow stalks takes place. On land cut as close to the ground as possible,



Hauling to the Drop off Point (Hardest part of the job)

The area surrounding cutting locations 1 and 2 are on land and made dragging of the tarps difficult. At area 3 and 4 the water is knee-deep and a considerable distance from the drop off point making hauling hard work. Walking is difficult in submerged cobbled areas and the thick mud. Need to establish haul routes that provide safe footing and are as short as possible. Where water is deeper canoe or zodiac inflatables can be used to transport the cuttings across the water. It may also be possible to dump cuttings directly into trucks or containers to reduce handling, as this is the most labour intensive task



Canoe being used in deeper water to transport cuttings to land



Piles of Cut *Phragmites* from Stands 3 and 4 ready for Pick up on Heather Pathway



Piles of Cuttings from Stands 1 and 2 Ready for Pick Up



Job Well Done off to the Gun Club for Lunch
(Note the waterline)

Where Do We Go From Here

There needs to be a continued effort in monitoring. As shown in the following photos large stands of *Phragmites* exist both in private and public ownership and will continue to grow and spread. Efforts need to be made to prioritize and plan next year's cutting effort. In the Harbour, Silver Creek Wetland, Black Ash and Townline Creeks there are stands that will need to be taken out and those areas cut this year will need to be monitored to see the success of this year's cutting program. Re-cutting will be necessary, as it takes several years to make an impact.

We need public awareness of the issue. We need NVCA to champion and continue to spearhead this activity and we need to find funding.

We need volunteers to help out. Suggested volunteers could come from local landowners, students needing “community service hours,” church groups, local community organizations such as Rotary, Lions and Probud.

More publicity would be helpful and advertisements in the Connections, Enterprise Bulletin, On The Bay, and local radio and TV stations such as the Peak FM , 104 The Dock, Roger’s Cable and CTV is suggested and should be well before the event to provide broader public awareness of the problem.



HWY 26 at Silver Creek Wetland Looking East

This is a very large stand of *Phragmites* located on the north side of the Highway 26 road easement just west of Silver Creek. It is on both private and public lands. In past the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has applied the pesticide TOUCHDOWN TOTAL® a herbicide in the ditches to prevent *Phragmites* growth and while MTO are allowed to do this, the manufacturers safety data sheets state for the

product used, “HARMFUL to aquatic organisms. Avoid direct application to any body of water populated with fish or used for domestic purposes.”

Run-off from the ditches will find its way eventually into the wetland and could be harmful to the environment. Note, many of the large trees bordering the stand are dead and this may be due to the *Phragmites* blocking or starving water supplies to the tree root systems. During the critical period in late July and August MTO could use power cutters in areas close to wetlands and harvest the cuttings so that regrowth is reduced.



Mountain Road at Black Ash Creek

This stand of *Phragmites* shown above is in Black Ash Creek and despite ice cover and heavy spring run-off seems to thrive. Seeds are finding their way into Collingwood Harbour and stands are now

appearing in the Harbour at the mouth of the creek and in the excavations at the Shipyards.

On behalf of the Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation, we thank all who volunteered for their efforts in this year's "Fight the Phrag" program.

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