

# **Lake Minnewawa Association**

## **Aquatic Plant Mechanical Harvesting Policy, July 2017**

Lake Minnewawa is classified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) as a eutrophic type lake. One characteristic of this type of lake is an abundant level of aquatic vegetation. Mechanical harvesting has proven to be an effective and environmentally safe means by which to control excessive aquatic vegetation growth. It is also one of the few options to remove the nutrients, which are bound in plants from the lake.

LMA seasonal harvesting operations are conducted through a permit issued by MN DNR authorizing the destruction of aquatic vegetation and is subject to all terms and conditions put forth by MN DNR. The seasonal permit allows harvesting of submerged vegetation in offshore areas that are greater than 150 feet from shore and is the primary mission of LMA harvesting operations. The permit allows operations to begin on June 1<sup>st</sup> and expires on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The actual start and end dates are dependent on seasonal growth variations that rely on several environmental factors and harvesting budget.

The lake is divided into five harvesting zones. LMA staff will perform regular reconnaissance surveys of the five zones to evaluate when and to what extent mechanical harvesting is appropriate. Initially, each zone will be evaluated on the bases of where the greatest public use is impaired by offshore emergent vegetation. The primary method used for gauging vegetation density is comparing time spent on a respective area to the amount tonnage (loads) removed. Harvesting effectiveness is dependent on vegetation density and lake access location for the shoreline trailer and truck. The closer the access point is to the area being cut, the more effective the harvesting operation will be. Therefore, duration of time spent in a zone will not be the sole factor used to determine harvesting efficiency or completion of a zone.

Harvesting operation employs a crew that work Monday through Friday so as not to conflict with weekend enjoyment of the lake. The Harvesting Manager has the day to day authority and responsibility for the coordination and operation of harvester and the associated equipment.

For reasons of insurance limitations and liability only LMA board of directors and harvesting employees are allowed to operate and service harvester, or drive vehicles. Riding along on harvester or truck is not allowed.

Reporting of harvesting operations will be posted on LMA Website ([www.lakeminnewawa.org](http://www.lakeminnewawa.org)) and updated every two weeks starting on the first of June. This will provide interested parties a convenient way to access information regarding LMA seasonal harvesting operations.

LMA seasonal harvesting permit is for offshore control of aquatic vegetation to provide clear passage in public areas of the lake and does not include cutting vegetation for individual riparian owners to gain access to open water. Individual riparian owners that feel they need assistance in gaining access to open water must contact MN DNR [www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/apg/regulations.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/apg/regulations.html) to apply for a permit to destroy aquatic vegetation for that purpose. If the MN DNR grants the riparian owner a permit allowing the removal of vegetation to gain access to open water, it is the riparian's responsibility for the removal of the vegetation and maintaining the channel to open water. The riparian may remove the vegetation themselves or hire a private company to remove the vegetation.

LMA will endeavor to assist riparian owners that request vegetation removal by the harvester machine to gain access to open water; however mechanical limitations or navigation hazards may limit the ability or effectiveness of vegetation removal. The harvesting machine and operators(s) are restricted from navigating in close to shore for the purpose of picking up aquatic vegetation collected by a riparian property owner. Delays may also be experienced due to primary mission of harvesting operations or work schedule.

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The riparian owner must submit a signed copy of the required DNR permit with the property owner's first and last name, and property I.D. number to LMA P.O. Box 58 McGregor, MN. 55760 Attention Harvesting Operations before any work will be performed. The harvesting crew will make every effort to be at the riparian owner's property within two (2) weeks of confirmation of proper DNR permitting. The riparian owner is responsible to make a sign using 3 or 4 inch tall characters displaying the required DNR permit number attached to the riparian owners dock. LMA harvester will cut a path that is consistent with DNR regulations and no closer than 15 feet to the front of riparian owners dock. Each riparian owner will be limited to a maximum of two (2) clearing passes per season.

Criteria which determines when and where aquatic vegetation is to be harvested includes:

- 1.) **Operating Budget:** Based on funds held by LMA and funds available from other sources a harvesting budget is established. The budget will determine the length of the harvesting season. Harvesting season will not be expanded beyond the established seasonal budget.
- 2.) **Weather:** Harvesting operations will be delayed if weather conditions jeopardize the safety of the crew members or risk damage to harvesting equipment.
- 3.) **Seasonal Climate Trend:** Increased light penetration in the water column, high water temperatures and low water levels increase the likelihood of excessive vegetation growth. Under these conditions the planned harvesting schedule will be adjusted as needed to prioritize areas to maximize coverage based on remaining operating budget.
- 4.) **Mechanical Limitations:** The mechanical harvester is designed to cut aquatic vegetation. However, the harvester is not able to cut some type of plants. Server damage to mechanical harvester will result from dredging mud from bottom of lake. Dredging is an illegal act and will not be allowed.
- 5.) **No-Cut Areas:**
  - 5.1) **Critical Native Plants** – These areas are classified by MN DNR to have significant populations of beneficial or protected native plants.
  - 5.2) **Navigation Hazards** – These are areas of rock/rocky structure and shallow areas where the mechanical harvester cannot operate due to barge draft.
  - 5.3) **Undeveloped Shoreline** – These are undeveloped areas and harvesting will not be done.
  - 5.4) **Shoreline Docks** – Areas around riparian owned docks and boat lifts including swimming area and floating rafts.
  - 5.4) **North End Bay** – The east side of this area is an imaginary line that extends from Warner's Point in a north easterly direction to the western most property line of parcel number 29-0-045903 on the north shore of the bay.
  - 5.5) **South End Bay** – The south bay area that lies to the west and south of an imaginary line that extends from western shoreline to the eastern shoreline just south of Minnewawa Sportsman's Club.
  - 5.6) **Sensitive Habitat** – These are designated by MN DNR as important fish spawning and/or juvenile fish cover areas.