

MEMORANDUM

TO: Park Advisory Commission

FROM: Colin Smith, Parks & Recreation Services Manager
Cheryl Saam, Facility Supervisor, Ann Arbor Canoe Liveries

DATE: February 26, 2013

SUBJECT: Gallup Park Livery Aquatic Plant Management Analysis

The impoundments along the Huron River in Ann Arbor are ideal environments for invasive and prolific aquatic vegetation growth. The excessive plant growth, primarily invasive Eurasian watermilfoil, has decreased the diversity of the native plant community, created aesthetic problems, increased the rate of sedimentation in the impoundment, reduced water clarity, is perceived as unsafe and has hindered recreational use. Vegetation in Geddes Pond has reached a nuisance level with solid or near solid surface canopy conditions that limit navigation and recreational activities (see attached images).

In 2008 the HRIMP aquatic vegetation subcommittee began addressing this problem. Over the last year City staff from varied disciplines including Natural Area Preservation staff, the Environmental Coordinator, the Water Quality Manager and Parks & Recreation Services staff examined a number of aquatic plant management strategies including mechanical harvesting, herbicide, dredging, drawdown and biological control. It was concluded that at this time mechanical harvesting is our best option for Geddes Pond.

Aquatic plant harvesting can be performed using an environmentally sound method to control excessive aquatic plant growth and nuisance vegetation in waterways of all sizes. Like an underwater lawn mower, an aquatic weed harvester cuts or pulls the vegetation, collecting and storing the weeds on board and depositing cut weeds on the shore. No permit is required for harvesting aquatic plants. Many communities and park systems, such as Huron Clinton Metroparks and Dane County Wisconsin, own and operate aquatic plant harvesters.

In June 2012 the City hired a company for the first time to mechanically harvest the aquatic plants adjacent to the Gallup Park Canoe Livery. The cost to harvest the 7 acres adjacent to the Gallup Park Canoe Livery was \$7,500. The aquatic plants grew back in 2-4 weeks therefore we anticipate that harvesting would need to be completed 3x/year in order to be effective.

As a result, City staff intends to hire an aquatic plant harvesting company to harvest up to 10 acres of aquatic plants in the Gallup Park Livery area of Geddes Pond with up to three cuttings in the summer of 2013. The City will issue an RFP with a scope of work

developed by Natural Area Preservation staff, the Environmental Coordinator, the Water Quality Manager and Parks & Recreation Services staff.

For 2013, only select areas in the Gallup Park Livery and Public Boat launch area will be cleared of aquatic plants. Staff believes it is prudent to focus efforts on one area to determine efficacy before considering extending the approach to other areas along the Huron River. The area at Gallup is heavily used by people renting equipment from the canoe livery and excessive vegetation has a negative effect on both the customer experience and revenue generation.

By incorporating environmentally-sensitive practices, effort will be made to protect aquatic species such as turtles and fish during the harvesting process, with the goal of decreasing invasive species, improving aesthetics, enhancing safety, and to allow for recreation boating such as canoeing, kayaking, paddleboating and small motorboats. Aquatic plant material will be removed from the river and composted at City Compost Center. City staff will monitor the effect and impact of harvesting on the aquatic plants, animals and boating recreation.

Upon completion of the summer season, City staff will evaluate if harvesting is a feasible and effective method for aquatic vegetation control and recommend a future aquatic plant management plan considering other impoundment areas in the city such as Barton, Argo, South and Superior Ponds that have aquatic vegetation growth with some areas interfering with river recreation. Staff anticipates harvesting will need to be continued annually. If it is determined that the City purchase and operate a harvester the Parks & Recreation staff will research different funding options and partnerships and bring recommendations to PAC.

The City of Ann Arbor manages the Huron River and the impoundments as they flow through the city by maintaining the dams, clearing woody debris to keep the river open for river recreation, harvesting aquatic vegetation and by providing different types of river recreation. Our goal is to have a long term aquatic vegetation harvesting program in place by the spring of 2014.



Photos clockwise beginning upper left:

Paddleboats and dock in livery area to Huron Pkwy bridge; Rowboat in water between livery area and Huron Pkwy bridge; Livery dock looking south to islands; Northwest section in front of livery area; Proposed circle path area between public boat launch and east to pedestrian bridges; Public boat launch path out to river