

Re: European Water Chestnut Rapid Removal Program in the Welland River

July 13, 2023

Dear Landowner,

Please review this information from the Invasive Species Centre (www.invasivespeciescentre.ca/EWCWelland) and the European Water Chestnut Rapid Removal Program.

European Water Chestnut in the Welland River

European Water Chestnut (EWC) (*Trapa natans*) is an aggressive invasive aquatic plant that was detected in the Welland River by a recreational paddler in July 2020. Four observations were submitted to [EDDMapS](#), a digital invasive species reporting and tracking tool, which triggered a response by the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMNRF). European Water Chestnut is regulated under the Ontario Invasive Species Act (2015) because of its invasive qualities and potential to cause harm to Ontario's environment, economy, and society.



An EWC plant from the Welland River.

European Water Chestnut Harmful impacts

EWC is an annual plant that grows from seeds dropped the year before. The plant will grow stems from the seed to the surface of the water. Each stem may produce several branches, each terminating in a rosette that flowers and produces seed. Stems will produce linear leaves which drop early and are replaced by adventitious roots that intertwine with each other in the water column. The result, by July each year, is a dense, floating mat that shades out the water and plants below. This dense mat can become so thick it will alter the flow of water. Plant materials can get lodged in small boat motors, and paddle boats will stall on top of the mat. The seeds are jagged and can cause cuts or pain when stepped on, which makes wading or walking in the water dangerous. The dense mat will shade out native aquatic plants and alter aquatic ecosystems. The entire mat will decompose in the fall and create anoxic conditions in the river harming fish and other aquatic species.



EWC in the Welland River in 2023.

European Water Chestnut Rapid Response Program

With support from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks' Great Lakes Local Action Fund and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) Hit Squad Program (via Canada Summer Jobs), the Invasive Species Centre and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) launched a [Rapid Response Program](#) in 2022 to contain the spread of EWC in the Welland River. The program aims to contain the population within 4 years. EWC seeds can survive and sprout for up to 10 years so the initial control efforts will be followed by a monitoring and maintenance program.

Control efforts may look different each year; EWC can be managed using manual activities, heavy equipment, and herbicides. Year one of the EWC Rapid Response Program concluded in 2022, with the ISC successfully removing the known extent of EWC in the Welland River

This year, the 2023 EWC control summer program will employ three OFAH Hit Squad Field Technicians and one Team Lead to manually remove the plant from the river. The team will be using a small motorboat and canoes to carefully transport the biomass (removed plants) to either E.C. Brown Conservation Area or Chippawa Creek

Conservation Area. The team will be working on the river between mid-May and September 15th. Other control methods will not be considered until manual activities are deemed ineffective.

Landowners with properties on the Welland River are encouraged to participate in the program. There are numerous opportunities to assist with removal of European Water Chestnut.

How to Help

1. **Learn to identify and report European Water Chestnut.** There are two Bring-your-own-Boat (BYOB) Paddling Tours to provide residents with an opportunity to learn more about this invasive plant, how to identify it, how to help, and how to report any additional sightings in the Niagara Region.
 1. Both tours are taking place from E.C. Brown Conservation Area. The first successful event was held on Friday, July 7 at 10 a.m. and the second will be **Saturday July 22, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.**
2. **Support the OFAH Hit Squad Field Technicians.** Landowners can support the control program in any of the following ways:
 - a. **River Access.** Do you own and maintain a private boat ramp that can launch a truck with trailer and small boat, AND/OR canoe and kayaks?
 - b. **Emergency Exits.** Can you provide a place for temporary docking in case of an emergency due to inclement weather or another emergency?
 - c. **Biomass Disposal.** If you have a place where biomass might be placed, EWC plants will rapidly decompose once removed from the river. If we can save time transporting plants to Chippawa Creek or E.C. Brown Conservation Areas, this could greatly increase the amount of EWC we can remove from the river this year. Do you have a location far enough away from the river that it will not wash back where the team might pile EWC to decompose? Or do you have a place where they might pile EWC for the day, before loading into the truck to save the need for trips up and down the river to empty bins?
 - d. **Health Breaks.** Can you offer any place for the team to take short breaks (e.g., grassy area, dock, washrooms, drinking water, or business open during regular working hours)?



The EWC team!

Your participation in the program is entirely voluntary. If you want to help, have questions, or would like more information, please contact me, the program coordinator, at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Jenna White
Program Development Coordinator
Invasive Species Centre