

# Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) Update - September 2025

Well, it's been a busy summer! The SDR Board wanted to provide an update on our Lake Stewardship efforts and share some of the amazing work that has taken place this past summer.

## The SDR AGM - Laying the Foundation

It started with our AGM on July 5th where we shared with members more information on Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) and our efforts to identify, map the colonies and begin to undertake manual removal of plants.

We also introduced the **SDRA Lake Stewardship Fund** which will help us financially support our Lake Health work. We raised over \$500 at the AGM in support of our work. At our SDR events this summer we continued to receive donations from members, and the fund raised \$1,200 this year. While we were unsuccessful in our bid for a grant from the Invasive Species Centre this year, with the help of the fund we have been able to still deliver on our plan.



With the help of the fund, we have invested in improved water testing equipment, purchased signs and yellow marker buoys to mark dense EWM colonies. We have saved money through creativity by making our own removal tools, and benefited from member donations of cinder blocks to use as anchors to attach the buoys.

## Communication and Awareness



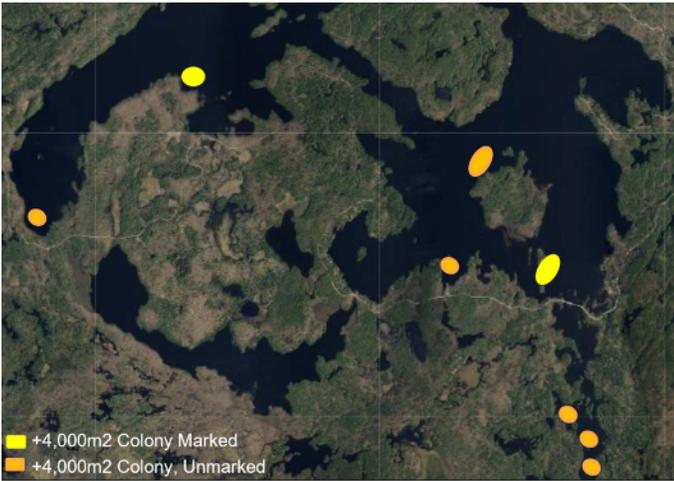
Jeff Miller & Dan Butler with the unit

With the support of Addington Highlands and Quinte Conservation Authority, we had the portable boat cleaning unit at the Trail's End Boat Launch for the week and brought it to the AGM to show members. Dan Butler, Invasive Species Specialist with Quinte Conservation Authority, was on hand to profile the unit and to stress the importance of Clean, Drain, Dry in preventing the introduction of Invasive Species into our Lake. **It's the LAW!**

In an effort to educate and change behaviour, EWM warning signs were installed in April at all of our four boat launches. The signs indicate "Invasive Species Alert" "Eurasian Milfoil Weed Beds Present" and advise boaters to keep out of areas marked with yellow buoys in order to avoid the spread. The signs also indicate the importance of Clean + Drain + Dry to prevent the introduction and spread of Invasive Species.



Jeff Miller installing signs



The yellow buoy barricades have been installed at two of our largest colonies, shown in yellow on the map. Our Lake Stewardship Fund has helped pay for the buoys. The expensive part are the cinder blocks which anchor the buoys.



**Thanks again to our members who have donated nearly two dozen cinder blocks!**

## **EWM Removal Efforts**



Workshops were held at Trail's End on July 19th and 21st. Close to 40 members signed up to participate in the training sessions. Duncan Armstrong, Lake Steward, covered important topics ranging from how to identify EWM to how to effectively remove it. Members were encouraged to take ownership of their cottage waterfront and to support neighbours in their area. A good number of volunteers came forward to help with removal of plants adjacent to private properties. Removing plants along crown land shorelines is a different matter, requiring a permit.

**Thank you to everyone who came out to support the efforts!**

With the help of our amazing volunteers we have tackled the removal of single EWM plants in high traffic and sensitive areas. Much of this has been accomplished with home-made removal tools but also by snorkeling or diving to pull the plants. It's important to only do this before late August, and before the plant becomes too brittle. It's also important to try and get the root, if you can, for a complete removal.

**Together we have removed 1,000+ plants from Skootamatta Lake this summer!**

## **EWM Tracking & Mapping**

It is critical that we have a clear understanding of how this invasive species spreads or density increases over time. A huge effort has gone into mapping our EWM locations and collecting data on the colony characteristics. We are using GIS apps (MAP PLUS) to mark the boundaries of colonies using cell phone technology. Data on colony location, size and depth provide important insights. Data is also collected on number of plants removed, their locations, and the number of volunteer hours applied. This work is important to help us determine potential changes in colonies year over year, and to measure the success of our program.

## **Lake Water Testing**

Water testing is an important part of our program. As noted at the AGM, the Association has spent a number of hours working with other Associations and experts to determine the most important metrics to measure. While all metrics matter, and we will continue to be tracked, the focus is on Water Clarity (Secchi depth), PH, Dissolved Oxygen and Water Temperature. These items have been correlated to and help predict the conditions optimal for the growth of invasive species. We have made a step change this year with the purchase of a new Dissolved Oxygen tester and a variable depth sampler which are giving us new and valuable lake data.

## **Working with our Partners**



On July 30th we were joined by staff members of Quinte Conservation Authority and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) for a day on the water.

It was a great opportunity for them to gain an appreciation of the lake and our challenges, and to share best practices. The group observed EWM colonies, and practiced removal techniques for the day.

## **What lies ahead for 2026?**

Our work on invasive species continues. If you are part of our volunteer group - thank you - you are making a difference!

The team will continue to expand the communication and signage for invasive species at our boat launches, search for new growth areas, map out existing locations and measure growth patterns to assess the effectiveness of our 2025 manual removal program. We will continue to expand markers in the lake to further isolate high traffic areas and work with our great volunteers to continue to grow the team helping to focus on this significant threat. We will also continue to investigate longer term strategies and potential solutions needed to address the large colonies that have moved beyond our ability to address with current tools.

Next year we are beginning to assess a project to restore our Walleye spawning beds, in partnership with Watersheds Canada.

If you haven't yet had a chance to volunteer, we hope the summer of 2026 will be your time to get involved. Let us know at [\*\*lakestewardship@skootamatta.ca\*\*](mailto:lakestewardship@skootamatta.ca)

## **Your SDRA Board of Directors**