

## **SDRA - December 2024 Eurasian Water Milfoil Update**

As many Association members are aware, the SDRA Board and volunteers discovered Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM), an invasive, foreign aquatic weed, in Skootamatta Lake during the Summer of 2023. This update is intended to bring SDRA members, family and neighbours up to speed on recent Board efforts to better understand where EWM is, how it is affecting Skootamatta Lake and what we, as a community, can do to prevent further spread of EWM and mitigate its impact on the health of our lake, our family and recreational interests.

During the Summer of 2024 a dozen Board members and volunteers conducted the first comprehensive survey of EWM throughout Skootamatta. Almost sixty (60) volunteer hours were dedicated to this effort. A map, depicting larger, well-established colonies of EWM on Skootamatta is attached to the bottom of this update. In addition to the colonies, volunteers also identified over 100 other sightings of individual or small numbers of plants. A map depicting these small-scale sightings has not been produced at this time.

The SDRA, in addition to closely monitoring the presence of EWM on Skootamatta, has been exploring options to better understand the impact of EWM on similar Lakes across Ontario. This includes the review of efforts on nearby lakes in the Land O' Lakes region, as well as those farther abroad in Eastern Ontario, the Kawarthas and across Central Ontario. It has also involved consultation with Quinte Conservation, the Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations (FOCA), Watersheds Canada, The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Parks.

The SDRA is in the midst of completing an updated Strategic Management Plan to address the evolving interests and concerns of our membership. As part of the process of updating our Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, Goals and Objectives, we will also be updating our Lake Management Plan.

While updating our plans, there has been a strong focus on invasive species identification and education on potential impacts on the lake and water quality. The following efforts are underway:

- **Extensive Water Quality Monitoring:** The SDRA is building upon our multi-year commitment to test a variety of water metrics by again participating in the Annual Lake Partner and Water Rangers Programs, and by expanding the scope of independent SDRA water quality testing, to better assess the impact of EWM and other threats to lake health, such as Climate Change, shoreland development and increased lake activity.
- **Enhanced EWM Survey and Inventory Mapping:** The SDRA will expand monitoring efforts to assess growth of known locations, identify and map rate of distribution and growth, identify locations of heavy boat traffic warranting marker buoys, and educational signage.

- **Learning about EWM and Facilitating Networking and Partnerships:** In an attempt to develop uniform strategies that build on past successes and to exchange knowledge, accelerate decision-making and achieve efficiencies, the SDRA will identify experts, government leads, other stakeholder organizations, and area cottage associations.
- **Awareness and Education:** The SDRA will provide the SDRA membership, other lake residents and lake users with Tip Sheets and Extension Notes on how to identify EWM, reduce its spread, contribute to SDRA education and abatement efforts, produce presentations and other resources, and conduct site visits.
- **Proactive Communications:** The SDRA will continue to provide regular updates on our EWM efforts for members. The SDRA will also explore ways to reach non-SDRA members, in order to build their understanding and build a broader community capacity to reduce the spread of EWM.

The SDRA Board is committed to a careful, methodical approach to addressing EWM. At this time, we are in the learning and simple prevention measures phase of our work. The SDRA Board and volunteers are dedicated to learning more about where EWM exists in Skootamatta, and putting measures in place to monitor spread and growth. In addition, we will be putting in place low impact prevention measures, such as signage and markers to help SDRA members, other lake residents and users, understand and avoid activities that can accelerate the spread of EWM. As we learn more about its growth, spread and impact, and further connect with experts in this area, we will be in a better position to look at evaluating and recommending longer term solutions.

Along with the organizations noted above, the Board has also recently reached out to Addington Highlands Township Council to seek their input and support. The Board has also begun conversations about collaborating with Quinte Conservation, given that Skootamatta is the largest headwater lake in their watershed jurisdiction. The Board is also planning on submitting a grant application for financial support to the Ontario Invasive Species Centre Action Fund, which is administering provincial funding on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. These funds will be used to further our understanding of EWM and to support our communication and prevention efforts.

The SDRA has set some ambitious goals to maintain the quality of our lake for current and future generations. We need your support to make this all possible. Your help in enabling the association to complete the above activities and other Board priorities is greatly needed and appreciated. Thank you to those that have volunteered their time already!

We will do our best to keep everyone informed as we go. If you have questions or comments please send them to [info@skootamatta.ca](mailto:info@skootamatta.ca)

We appreciate your interest and support as we move forward with this, and many other, important and strategic priorities to protect our lake health.

# Skootamatta Lake Invasive Eurasian Water Milfoil Colony Map

(completed by SDRRA volunteers, Summer, 2024)

