

MONITORING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

in the Elk River Chain of Lakes

Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Clean Water Fund, the Watershed Council is currently monitoring the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL) for five priority invasive species: curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, invasive *Phragmites*, purple loosestrife, and quagga mussels. During the spring and summer of 2014, monitoring was carried out in the Upper Chain from Beals Lake to Intermediate. Monitoring was accomplished through benthic tows and visual surveys. In addition, detailed vegetation surveys were conducted on Hanley and Intermediate Lakes.

Following 35 benthic tows along the bottom of lakes and interconnecting waterways of the Upper Chain, not a single quagga mussel was found. Only two patches of *Phragmites* were documented after combing over 50 miles of shoreline. Not unexpectedly, purple loosestrife was found throughout the Upper Chain, but generally in small isolated patches. No

curly-leaf pondweed was documented and Eurasian watermilfoil was found in small quantities in Six Mile and St. Clair Lakes only.

Next year, the monitoring continues in the Lower Chain from Lake Bellaire to Elk Lake, with detailed vegetation surveys scheduled for Lake Skegemog and Elk Lake. Upon completing all field work, we will develop maps and a report, share findings, and pursue control measures with lake associations and other partners. Furthermore, we are working with the Antrim Conservation District to hold workshops for partner organization members interested in learning more about the project and how to identify and document priority invasive species. Please contact Kevin Cronk, Monitoring and Research Director, if you are interested in attending a workshop (partners include Six Mile Lake Association, Intermediate Lake Association, Three Lakes Association, and Elk-Skegemog Association) at 231-347-1181, ext 109.