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2022 Starry Stonewort Early Detection Survey

Lake Minnetonka (#27-0133); Cooks, Halstead, Regional Park, Grays
Hennepin County, MN



Diver Survey, Analysis, and Reporting by:

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*Prepared for Lake Minnetonka Association
September 2022*

Survey Method

Environs, LLC completed early detection diver surveys in Lake Minnetonka on 1 September 2022.

The focus of this early detection survey was to search for any new invasive plants or animals in the area immediately surrounding the public access sites with a focus on starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa* hereafter referred to as SSW).

Intensive SSW surveys were conducted in the areas surrounding the following 4 public boat access sites:

- Surfside (Cooks Bay)
- Halstead Bay
- Minnetonka Regional Park
- Grays Bay



Surfside (Cooks Bay)



- No SSW found at Surfside.
- Previously confirmed Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed were found.
- Native plant growth dominated with water stargrass with scattered coontail, clasping leaf pondweed, and chara (a common SSW look-alike).
- Substrate composition has thin, soft mucky layer; underwater visibility 1-3 meters.

Link to photos and videos with comments: [Surfside](#)

Halstead Bay



- No SSW found at Halstead.
- No other submerged plants found.
- Substrate around access is thick muck composed of biodegradable organic matter settled on bottom.
- Underwater visibility <.3 meter. This high turbidity (very low clarity) of water is generally not a suitable environment to support plant growth. (Underwater videos and photos did not turn out due to the abundance of particles in the water.)

Link to photos with comments: [Halstead](#)

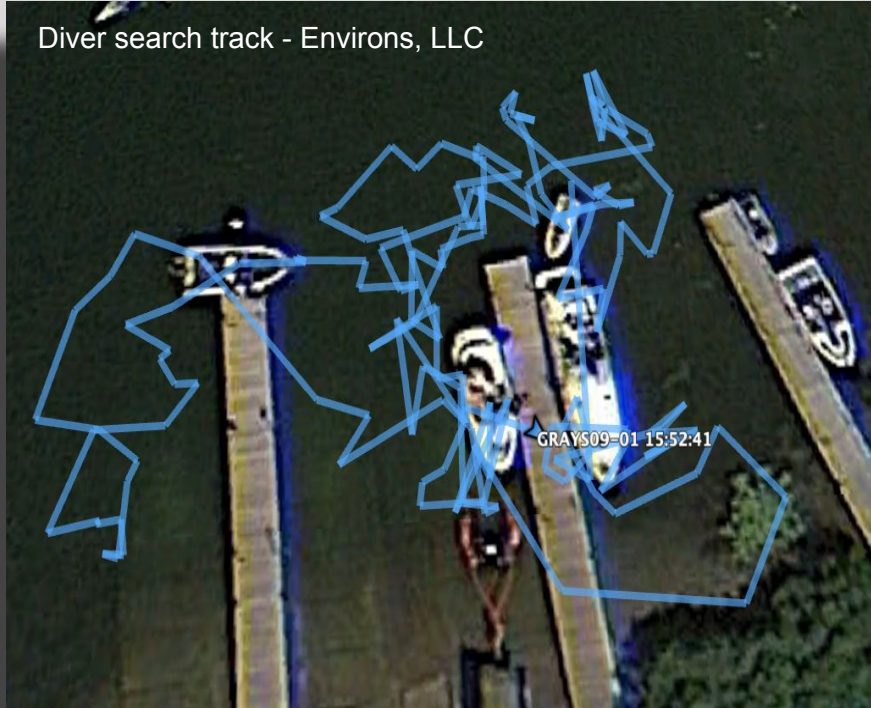
Minnetonka Regional Park



- No SSW found at Regional Park.
- Previously confirmed Eurasian watermilfoil found with larger concentration on NW side of boat ramp.
- Narrow-leaved water plantain found west of access (listed as species of special concern by DNR in 2013.)
- Area around access has tall, dense native plants dominated with water stargrass, water celery, and large-leaf pondweed. Area close to ramp has sparse plants with exposed substrate suitable for new plant growth.
- Substrate composition appears supportive of plant growth; underwater visibility 3-4 meters.

Link to photos and videos with comments: [Regional](#)

Grays Bay



- No SSW found at Grays Bay.
- Previously confirmed Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed scattered around area with higher presence west of westernmost ramp.
- Zebra mussel clumps more present than previous accesses.
- Abundant healthy native plants dominated with water stargrass, water celery, and chara which grows throughout access area with new growth scattered among well-established plants. Area close to ramp has exposed substrate suitable for new plant growth.
- Substrate composition appears supportive of plant growth; underwater visibility 3-4 meters.

Link to photos and video with comments: [Grays](#)

Recommendations, Resources and Contacts

The recent discovery of starry stonewort in 3 more MN lakes, including Lake Bemidji, indicates it continues to spread to new waterbodies. Lake homeowners should be especially diligent about decontaminating any boats, docks, or boat lifts that move to/from other lakes. Though there are some methods to combat SSW, we do not currently have the management tools to address established growth on a lake-wide scale. Therefore, early detection surveys via scuba, followed by hand-pulling are the most effective tools of management to date. *It is highly recommended all accesses on Minnetonka lakes be put into a schedule for early detection dive surveys for annual inspection.*

Minnesota Administrative Rules for Aquatic Plant Management

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=6280>

Minnesota DNR – Aquatic Plant Management Regulations & Permit Application Forms

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/apm/index.html>

Minnesota DNR - Where Aquatic Plants Grow

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/apg/whereregrow.html>

Minnesota DNR - Narrow-leaved Water Plantain

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/rsg/profile.html?action=elementDetail&selectedElement=PMALI01010>

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