

## **Aquatic Plant (Weed) Harvesting Projects**

Aquatic plant harvesting has been a very important activity for the District, and has consumed a significant amount of time and resources throughout its history. Within a few months of the inception of the District, a petition from Melissa-Sallie residents called for establishment of a project to remove lake weeds. It was conventional wisdom among limnologists of the time that the most practical way of reducing nutrient levels in lakes was to remove plant material (which contains large quantities of nutrients). Indeed, the 1967 Overall Plan prominently featured mechanical removal of excess aquatic plants as a means to address lake "eutrophication". In 1968 the District established the first of three projects (Watershed District Project 1) aimed at removing aquatic plant material from Sallie and Melissa. Originally funded in large part by grant money and donations from the City, County and lake associations, Project 1 operated off an on until 1978. It was succeeded by Project 1a in 1978, and 1b in 1985; successor projects relied heavily upon donations from the District general fund, as well as direct assessment to affected lakeshore property owners.

After several years of systematic evaluation which received national attention, research by Dr. Joe Neel (UND) concluded that significant nutrient reduction could not be brought about by a harvesting. In the early 1970's the District shifted its harvesting emphasis towards reduce aquatic plants in order to enhance boating and swimming. A Detroit harvesting project (1-c) was established in 1990 with the added control of the exotic plant, Flowering Rush to its project purpose.

The harvesting projects continue today, but their scope has been considerably narrowed under the direction of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources which has generally discouraged broad applications of mechanical harvesting to lakes. Since 2003 there also has been some experimentation with herbicides to control Flowering Rush under the auspices of the Harvesting Projects.