

Restoration & protection

Purple Loosestrife Project

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a European plant species which is an aggressive invader of North American wetlands, lakes and rivers. Once established, purple loosestrife can become the dominant vegetation, forming large stands which significantly reduce the diversity of plants and degrade habitat quality.

While strikingly colorful and attractive when in bloom, purple loosestrife displaces native plants eliminating food and shelter for wildlife and other species.

Few viable solutions for managing this invasive weed have emerged. Control by conventional means (water level management, burning, herbicides, direct digging, cutting) has proven to be extremely difficult and impractical on a large scale.

An alternative is the biological control of purple loosestrife by introduction of a natural enemy known as *Galerucella californiensis*, a beetle that loves to eat loosestrife.

Loosestrife has recently become a problem along the shores of Grand Traverse Bay, due to low water levels that have created favorable habitat, and in other marsh areas throughout the watershed.

This spring, Russ Adams, a volunteer from the Silver Lake Association, led the charge in a small effort to begin trying to control this invasive plant.

With financial assistance from Garfield Township and The Watershed Center (from a grant received through the Great Lakes Alliance), a supply of beetles were



Left, Bellaire High School biology students collect benthic macro-invertebrates from the Cedar River, part of a study to evaluate the impact of the TCE plume from Mancelona on the river. The results of their work indicated no detectable damage to the insect populations in the river at this time. From left: Jesse Comben, Jocelyn Menestrina, Jim Cerica, Jack Folker. Above, Purple Loosestrife may be pretty, but it's not our friend. The prolific European perennial has cropped up along the shores of Grand Traverse Bay.

purchased and released at the following locations: the pond just north of Silver Lake; at the intersection of M-22 and M-72 near Tom's West Bay; and the wetlands at the Kid's Creek Restoration site near Kohl's and the Great Wolf Lodge.

Boardman Lake Cleanup

On June 26, The Watershed Center teamed up with the Traverse Area Association of Realtors, the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Dive Team, and Scuba North to organize a cleanup project in Boardman Lake. For a number of years, the realtors group has organized a similar cleanup on the Boardman River between the lake and Grand Traverse Bay.

The Boardman Lake Management Plan recommended undertaking some cleanup activities to remove years of debris and trash that has been tossed into the lake, so the partners agreed to shift their focus to the lake this year. Based on the amount of junk that was pulled out in just one morning, the group will be organizing more cleanups.

Approximately 70 volunteers, including many area scuba enthusiasts, collected approximately 50 tires, a number of bicycles, old wood and metal chairs, a truck bed, a refrigerator and even an upright vacuum.

Supporters include Boardman Lake Glens, which has provided food and financial assistance; Pat Noland Builder; Traverse Area Association of Realtors; SCUBA North; Ball Environmental & Planning Associates; Boardman West/Lake Ridge Condominiums; the American Canoe Association; Cherry Capital Paddlers

Club, Dino's Pizza; and the City of Traverse City Department of Public Works.

Wild Link: Maintaining Ecological Corridors

The Conservation Resource Alliance's (CRA's) regional Wild Link program was developed, recognizing that many wildlife species need large connected spaces for movement, feeding and reproduction. As land use changes, these connections can be broken, causing habitat fragmentation.

Jeff Breuker, Wild Link Project Manager, says, "To combat fragmentation, our program identifies the most critical connecting corridors and assists voluntary landowner participants that own property intersecting them, by preparing wildlife habitat management plans for these properties. The plans are written to address landowner goals and to enhance regional habitat connections."

If a Wild Link participant would like help implementing his or her plan, CRA will coordinate the project and may be able to pursue partial funding for it. Through this program, CRA plans to help preserve the rural character of northwestern lower Michigan and maintain its ecological integrity.

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More than 70 scuba divers and other volunteers helped haul years of accumulated junk from Boardman Lake.