



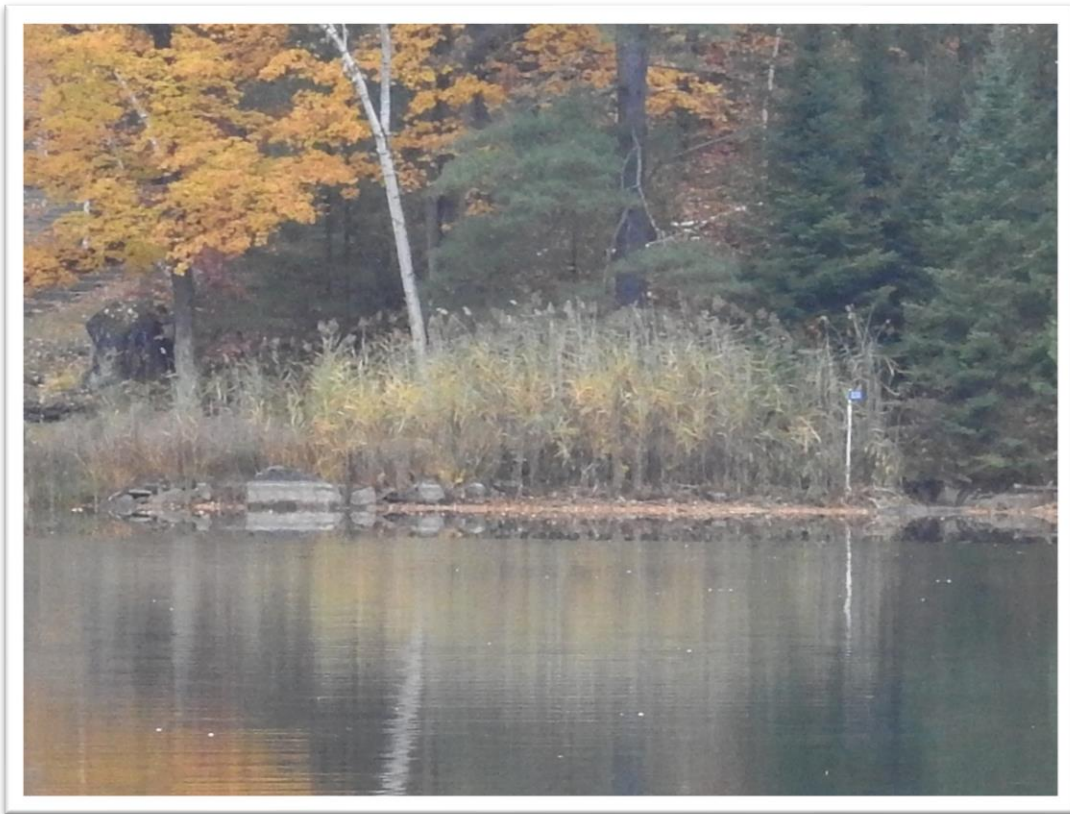
WHITE LAKE Property Owners Association
Environment Volunteers



Invasive Phragmites

One Cottager's Approach

Bruce Waddell, Three Mile Bay, White Lake



Invasive Phragmites on our shoreline 2015

I realized I had an infestation of invasive phragmites on a portion of my shoreline only after our property owner's association talked about the issue at an Annual General Meeting four or five years ago. Until then I viewed these tall grasses with their feathery plumes of seed waving in the breeze as aesthetically appealing. When I learned this was an [invasive species](#), my enjoyment of the tall fronds was curtailed and I started my quest for a practical, cottage-owner friendly way to manage the small infestation on my property.



Invasive Phragmites on our shoreline 2016

I have been asked to share with you my approach to managing invasive phragmites. My intent is to provide other cottage owners with a practical way to deal with small infestations on their properties. The strategy I have developed through trial and error is two-pronged ... first, manually harvest actively growing invasive phragmites to rob the plants of the opportunity to build up energy reserves (starve the plant) so native species can better compete; and, second, prevent the plants from reproducing (seeds or vegetative spread).

Where does one start? First you need to determine if you have invasive phragmites growing on your property by using this [guide](#).

Timetable

As soon as plants have grown enough to be identified I start to cut off the invasive phragmites stalks, usually in late May. I keep an eye peeled for renewed growth and cut back discernable stalks of invasive phragmites, usually in July and in September.

Harvesting

The most effective overall method I have found to harvest phragmites selectively is to use bypass pruning shears to cut the plants growing onshore near ground level, carefully leaving other native species of plants undisturbed. In addition, where possible I pull plants in the water along the shoreline sometimes removing rhizomes as well as the stalk. This manual harvesting is hard on my knees and back, so I don't do it all at one time but spread it out over several days. As noted above I harvest three times during the growing season which has gradually reduced the size and density of the cell.

I wear protective clothing (long pants, boots, long-sleeved top and gloves) and apply insect repellent and work carefully so as not to disturb native plants some of which have cutting leaves and/or spines that can abrade or puncture your skin, even with protective clothing, or that can cause skin irritation (poison ivy). My wife kindly checks me for deer ticks after I change and clean-up after harvesting.

I am careful to ensure none of the harvested material falls into the water and floats away. Some literature talks about 'spading', cutting the rhizomes with a sharp spade. My shoreline is rocky so attempts at spading resulted in damage to my spade and sore joints for the 'spader' with minimal impact on the phragmites.



native plants at shoreline September 2019

Disposal

I have an area of exposed bedrock within 10 meters of the shoreline. I pile all harvested material on the bed rock and leave it undisturbed to decompose naturally. I have not observed any regrowth there or nearby.

I have not eliminated the invasive phragmites from our cottage shoreline but have significantly reduced them, allowing native plant species to flourish and I have prevented or at least limited the spread of invasive phragmites from our property to other areas of the lake. The picture above shows our shoreline without any visible invasive phragmites and with a healthy growth of native plants.



A forager among native plants May 2021

This picture of our shoreline clearly shows that white-tailed deer feed on these native plants. We have never seen them eating the invasive phragmites.

June 2, 2022