



# Wisconsin's Aquatic Plant Management and Protection Program

(adapted from DNR APM resources)

Aquatic plants are an important part of healthy ecosystems, providing habitat for fish, invertebrates, and wildlife, preventing shoreline erosion, and protecting water quality by uptaking nutrients and producing oxygen. Diverse native plant communities also help prevent the establishment of invasive aquatic plants, such as Eurasian water-milfoil. It is clear that in order to maintain healthy lakes and rivers, we must maintain healthy native aquatic plant communities.

## Aquatic Plant Management

In an effort to protect diverse and stable communities of native aquatic plants and prevent the spread of invasive aquatic plants, many aquatic plant management and nuisance control activities require a permit issued by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

A permit is required

- any time that chemicals, biological controls, and physical techniques (e.g. drawdown or bottom plant barrier) are used; or
- when wild rice is involved; and
- when plants are removed mechanically or manually from an area greater than 30 feet in width along the shore

In general, there are four ways to control or remove aquatic plants:

1. Chemical: includes herbicides and some dyes. Only those chemicals registered with the U.S. EPA and Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) may be used. When controlling aquatic plants with chemicals, it is important to correctly identify the plants and the appropriate chemical beforehand and to be certain that treatment occurs at the proper timing and dosage. In order to apply chemicals in liquid form, the applicator must be licensed with the State. Therefore, DNR staff often recommend that people contract a commercial applicator.
2. Manual/Mechanical: includes hand-pulling and raking or mechanically harvesting plants. The DNR may require an Aquatic Plant Management Plan before it issues a permit for these control methods.
3. Physical: includes bottom plant barriers and water drawdown. These methods are used only in special circumstances.
4. Biological: includes herbivores and bacteria. Currently, the most common biological control is the Galerucella beetle, which is used to control the invasive plant purple loosestrife.



## APM Laws

Historically, the DNR required a permit only when chemicals were used to control aquatic plants, as described in Administrative Rule NR 107 “Aquatic Plant Management”, or when physical control involved methods, such as drawdown or a plant barrier, regulated by Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 30, “Navigable Waters, Harbors and Navigation”.

As of September 2001, however, the legislature passed a bill to further protect Wisconsin’s invaluable aquatic plant communities. The result is NR 109 “Aquatic Plants: Introduction, Manual Removal and Mechanical Control Regulations” that regulates mechanical and manual control of aquatic plants. Along with NR 109, statutes were also passed making it illegal to launch boats, boating equipment, or trailers that have aquatic plants or zebra mussels attached and requiring a permit for the introductions of aquatic plants for planting.

## APM Permits

Any person that controls aquatic plants with chemicals must apply for a Chemical Control of Aquatic Plants Permit from the DNR. Any person or organization, like a municipality, lake association, or lake district, that controls aquatic plants mechanically or manually must apply for a Mechanical/Manual Aquatic Plant Control Permit from the DNR. The only time a permit is not required to control aquatic plants is when an individual manually removes or gives permission to someone to manually remove plants, with the exception of wild rice, from his/her shoreline in an area that is thirty feet or less in width along the shore or when the exotic invasive plants Eurasian water-milfoil, curly-leaf pondweed, or purple loosestrife are manually removed.

For more information on aquatic plant management and protection, contact Frank Koshere, Water Resource Management Specialist at 715-392-0807/[frank.koshere@wisconsin.gov](mailto:frank.koshere@wisconsin.gov) or the APM Coordinator in your area. To find out who your APM Coordinator is, visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/county.htm>.

## Links

DNR’s Aquatic Plant Management and Protection Program Web site:  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/fhp/lakes/aquaplan.htm>

Administrative Rules:

NR 107 “Aquatic Plant Management” <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/nr/nr107.pdf>  
NR 109 “Aquatic Plants: Introduction, Manual Removal and Mechanical Control Regulations”  
<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/nr/nr109.pdf>

Aquatic Plant Management Guide:  
<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes/ecology/APMguide.asp>