

Pale Yellow Iris Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Update

As we have reported in previous issues of the RAG, the recent Turtle Chain Water Quality Study revealed that we had one invasive species of concern currently present on the Turtle Chain, the Pale Yellow Iris. Figure 3.4-13 from the final report shows the distribution of the Yellow Iris on the chain.

Yellow Iris is considered an invasive species because it disrupts the native vegetation and can even dry up wetlands. Originally, from the Eurasian continent, gardeners brought Yellow Iris to America for its beauty, but quickly began to dominate surrounding wetlands. The removal of this invasive species is important to allow native vegetation to re-establish on the shoreline.

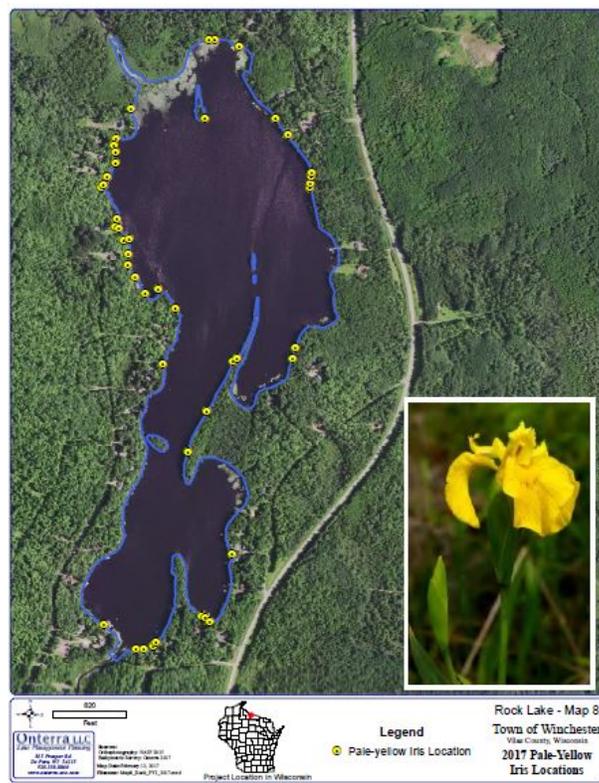


Figure 1. A map of where Yellow Iris was found on Rock Lake

There were approximately sixty (60) Yellow Iris sites on the Turtle Chain representing thirty (30) riparian property owners with the vast majority being located on Rock Lake. The Turtle Chain Implementation Plan included removal of the Yellow Iris from the Chain before it spreads further.

We contacted the thirty (30) property owners who had Yellow Iris growing on their shorelines and received return postcard responses from twenty-five (25), an 83% response rate. Eight (8) of the respondents indicated that they would remove the Iris themselves while seventeen (17) owners requested assistance in removal of the plants.

We enlisted the assistance of Jarod Scheff and Emily Heald at the North Lakeland Discovery Center (NLDC) to assist in Yellow Iris removal during the summer.

Jarod contacted the homeowners by phone to set up a time during the summer to remove the Iris on their property. After confirmation from the homeowners, Jarod sprang into action, and began removing the colonies of plants. We were unable to make contact with two of the respondents to schedule the removal

The process began on 6/10/2020 and was completed on 8/7/2020. Days that Jarod was on the water actively removing the iris were sprinkled throughout the summer, but the project took 61 hours to complete.



Figure 2. A Yellow Iris Rhizome and seed pods.

The most challenging portion of the removal process was ensuring the entire rhizome was removed from the soil to reduce the probability of resprouting in the future. Yellow Iris grows by sending out a thick red/orange rhizome into the soil, and multiple plants sprout off a single rhizome.

Some shorelines had substantial Iris communities and removal caused serious shoreline disruption. In order to prevent further shoreline erosion, native seeds such as fireweed, joe-pye and swamp milkweed were planted in the removal area.

Overall, the removal project succeeded in greatly reducing the population of Yellow Iris on the Turtle Chain of Lakes. Although Jarod did his best to remove all roots from the ground, there is still a high probability some Iris will grow back. In order to help stop it from spreading, we ask that you clip the flower heads from any new blooms next year and throw them in the garbage. This simple step will help stop the few re-sprouts from spreading back across your lake. We also would like to remind those owners who indicated that they would remove the plants on their property to get that done this fall or next summer at the latest.



Figure 3. Jarod after a fun filled day of Iris on Rock Lake

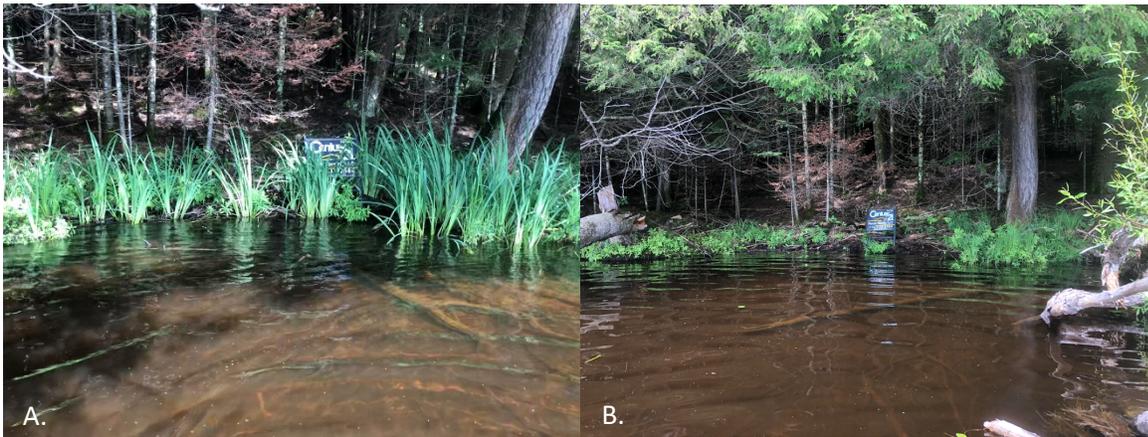


Figure 4. A.) Before Removal. B.) After Removal