

HARVESTING FAQ

It's spring. When will harvesting begin?

The permit from the DNR allows us to begin harvesting on June 1. In 2021, special permission was granted to begin harvesting on the main channel only starting on May 20. Fish are spawning along the shorelines so those areas are protected until June 1. Prior to the start of harvesting, the harvesting crew works on training, safety procedures and has all the equipment serviced and ready to begin on allowed dates.

How do you decide where and when to harvest?

The harvesting of weeds on our lake (other than a limited area permitted along shore by the landowner, see below) requires a permit from the DNR. The permit is good for three years – our current permit goes through the 2021 season. [This map](#) shows the approved harvesting routes for the 2020-2021 seasons. The lake district has a permit to cut weeds in specific locations that are approved by the DNR, and they cannot cut beyond those locations. Specific landowner requests to the harvesting crew cannot be accommodated.

What is the plan for how you will harvest the weeds over the entire lake and entire summer?

We follow a plan that has worked well in the past. On the east side of the Packwaukee causeway, the lake is divided into three sections. We start at the causeway and move toward the dam/dredge bank in Montello, working one section at a time, spending one week on each section (ideally). Our goal is to cover the entire east end in three weeks. We will then repeat the process as many times as possible throughout the summer. On the west end of Buffalo Lake (other side of causeway), we operate at the same time with separate machinery. We start at the causeway and proceed along the route identified headed west. This will also be repeated as often as possible.

It's after June 1, but I haven't seen the harvesting crews yet. When will they get to my area?

It takes time to cover the whole lake. In addition, there are always safety and maintenance issues to keep in mind. The harvesting crew works full days Monday through Thursday (Fridays off). Bad weather will keep us sidelined. In addition, as careful as we are to work on maintenance issues in the off season, there are instances when a piece of equipment is inoperable. If one of the pieces isn't able to go (for example, a harvester or transporter), it can slow down the whole process.

When do you cut the laterals – the lanes that go from shoreline to the middle channel?

The crew should be cutting the laterals as they progress down the lake. Within each section, the first priority is getting the main channel clear. After the main channel is clear, they will work on the secondary channels. They will cut the shoreline channel and when they reach a lateral position (a lane), they will cut that lateral and then keep moving down the lake.

Who is on the crew?

The Buffalo Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District hires a paid crew to do the harvesting each year. The Personnel subcommittee (under the Finance & Dues Committee) coordinates the hiring process with input from the Harvesting Committee. Currently, the crew consists of eight employees: 1 working foreman, 3 harvester operators, 1 transport operator, 2 truck drivers, and 1 mechanic. The employment period is from approximately mid-April to the first week in September.

What happens to the weeds that are harvested?

The weeds go from harvester, to transporter (on the water), to the conveyor (typically at the nearest boat launch). The conveyor drops them onto a dump truck that takes them to pre-arranged drop off sites. If you would like a dump truck load of lake weeds, contact Linda Huggett at 920-988-7111.

I have a lot of weeds around my dock. Can I clear these out?

You are allowed to manually remove the weeds from around your dock. The law allows a landowner to clear out weeds in an approximately 30-foot area from each side of a dock, without a permit. One district member uses a lake rake – a lightweight rake you toss out from shore to pull in the lake weeds. You can then use the weeds to mulch your garden or shoreline plants. They are a wonderful and free fertilizer.

Can the harvester come in closer to my dock?

For safety reasons, the harvesting equipment should not come closer than 10' to piers and parked boats.

When does the harvesting end each year?

Generally, the last week of August.

What can I do to help?

- Feedback, questions and comments are always welcome either through the Facebook page, website, or direct contact with [Joe Dion](#), District Chair, or [Gary Kershaw](#), Harvesting Committee chair. Whenever there is a question, we try to address it and put it out on Facebook and/or the web so that all can benefit from the answer. Many people are probably wondering the same thing, so go ahead and ask!
- If you would like to get more involved, consider joining the Harvesting committee or attending a meeting.
- Finally, when the harvesters come by, give them a wave and let them know that you are happy to see them and that you appreciate the work they do.

Why is the lake level so low?

Please see the Lake Level updates.