

Information/Reminder: Why we stock Eatonbrook Reservoir with Walleye Fish

July 2020

There have been questions circulating around the lake community recently regarding the issue of stocking fish in Eatonbrook Reservoir. This memo will serve as a reminder/refresher for veteran ELA members of how and why we stock fish in our lake, particularly Walleye. This may also be useful information for newer members who have not yet attended an ELA meeting, where we frequently discuss this issue.

Quite a few years ago, Paul Lord, a scientist from Cornell University, was studying the health of the lakes in our area to evaluate the explosive growth of an invasive species of Eurasian milfoil, which was out of control in Eatonbrook Lake at the time. Through a fisheries study Paul determined that a large percentage of Blue Gill and other pan fish, which were overpopulating our lake, primarily feed upon moths and weevils that naturally feed on Eurasian milfoil. Paul Lord concluded and recommended to the ELA members at that time, that stocking the lake with Walleye would help reduce the milfoil. The increase in the number of Walleye would in turn consume or reduce smaller pan fish. This practice had been previously successful at numerous other lakes. Today, the density of Eurasian milfoil has been significantly reduced in many areas of our lake. This has been an effort focused on controlling Eurasian milfoil, not the many other invasive species we have in the lake, including water chestnut, common pond weed, curly leaf pond weed, and others which tend to inhabit three of the shallower corners of the lake.

The Eatonbrook Lake Association members took Paul Lord's research results and recommendations under consideration and voted to begin stocking our lake with Walleye, which we have done every year since. Environmental changes are extremely slow to yield results as there are many factors to consider, including climate change, ice and snow duration, upland runoff volume, phosphorus levels, water clarity, in-lake storage releasing of stored nutrients and sun penetration that is impacted by our invasive zebra mussels.

Locally, Cazenovia Lake, Lebanon Reservoir, Lake Moraine, Tuscarora Lake, as well as Hatch and Bradley Brook Lakes, are all still stocking their lakes with Walleye. The study that Paul Lord conducted was a scientific, evidenced-based study. We, as a lake association, voted on Paul Lord's results and every year since then we have stocked our lake with Walleye, which has finally started to produce results that are evident to many waterfront owners.

The aquatic changes we have invested in take years to yield results. Changing course now that we have favorable results may result in a very different outcome, the results of which we may not see for a number of years. Some of the nearby lakes have desired faster results and added toxic herbicides to control the milfoil. These lakes have spent millions of dollars and are still battling excessive milfoil growth every other year, Cazenovia Lake being one of these. Eatonbrook Lake Association has spent a fraction of what other lake associations have spent that have chemically treated their lake or employed weed harvesters battling milfoil growth. Ultimately, it is the decision of our lake association members to spend funds donated for this significant improvement. I would ask that you look around the lake and let those results, what you see, speak for itself and then vote accordingly.

Colleen McSweeney