

Efforts continue to make Lambton Shores "Phrag Free Zone"

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By Kimberly Powell-McConaghy

The Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group (LSPCG) continues to make progress in habitat restoration within the community.

The Phragmites initiatives are being led by a group of volunteers known as the "Phrag Fighters" made up of Nancy Vidler, Bill MacDonald, Derek Scott, Paul Petersen, Ray Horban, Grace Dekker, Curtis Morris and Carole Cleave working to protect the natural heritage of the Municipality of Lambton Shores. This group has dedicated many hours to on-the-ground work, with volunteers now monitoring the sites that have been treated.

"Please keep in mind that eradicating the Common Reed will not happen with one treatment," says LSPCG Chair Nancy Vidler. "Touch up is imperative and in some cases will be required for many years. The good news is that with each treatment, there is less Phrag and managing becomes less costly."

To date, touch up work along the shoreline in Grand Bend was completed in June, thanks to a crew led by

Judy McDonald and Rose Heipel and progress is being made in Port Franks, where much touch up is required because of the density of the monoculture stands and many challenges arise.

These challenges include transporting equipment to island properties, higher water levels, weather and winds, safety issues and damage to equipment. "A huge obstacle is the inability of our contractor to have access to safe chemicals which can be used over water," says Vidler. "This has prevented us from beginning work in 'L Lake.'" She adds that the area is being closely monitored and will be treated when an opportunity presents itself.

Herbicide application along the banks of Mud Creek east of the bridge on Outer Drive will continue and many native plants are returning to the treated areas, says Vidler. "We have made great progress on the Port Franks beach and along Mud Creek west of the Outer Drive bridge," she adds. The Port Franks project is highlighted on the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative website.

The Ipperwash cottage associations are taking care

of their shoreline, thanks to an initiative of the West Ipperwash Beach Association and the Centre Ipperwash Community Association. The West Ipperwash Beach Association is partnering with Pete Cloud, of Kettle Point for the spraying of this property and future plans include tackling the ditches and drains and the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ministry of Natural Resources properties. In Kettle Point, Pete Cloud and his crew of volunteers are working to restore habitat.

The Lambton United Church Centre, Lake Valley Grove, Sunnidale, Pine Tree Estates, Cedarview Beach and Cedar Cove Marina all have restoration projects underway driven by Rick England, Carole Cleave, Larry Moore, Ellic Jackson, Larry Neumann, Dave Donald, Rui Baptista and the Cedarview Beach Association.

The group is faced with a new set of challenges in these areas within Ward 4, says Vidler. The shoreline is rocky with many rocky groins which makes it more difficult for the contractor and so much of the work is being completed using back packs. "It is important for

the landowners to understand that it is difficult to use an Argo in these areas and legislation prevents spraying over water," Vidler adds.

Another challenge is the large parcels of privately owned shoreline property. "We have asked the Ministry of Natural Resources to help us look for solutions for these 'orphaned habitats' that would be very costly for individual landowners to manage and if left untreated, will re-contaminate the work already done. Many of these areas have environmentally significant designation."

Despite the challenges, there has been a bright side

to treatment in Ward 4. The LSPCG has been successful in its grant application to the Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Fund and has received \$11,000 to put towards restoration work. "While this does not cover all of the cost, it definitely helps," says Vidler. "We continue to rely on contributions from property owners. We also have a new partner - the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority."

Lambton County will begin to treat the ditches and drains along county roads this month, beginning along Lakeshore Road and the LSPCG will work to engage the province and plan to ask that they take

responsibility for the section of Highway 21 which runs through the municipality. Lambton Shores has mapped the occurrence of Phragmites in municipal ditches and drains and is working towards control.

"Over the past three years, with the support of our community, the LSPCG has moved ahead restoring natural habitats and protecting our coastal dunes and wetlands," says Vidler. "We are making progress and are determined that Lambton Shores will become a 'Phrag Free Zone'. The Lambton Shores model is one that can be used by other municipalities throughout Ontario."