

**The Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association Bulletin  
Issue No. 44 – August 2020**



### **The Jute Tarp Project is Underway**

If you were in Blue Sea village during July, you might have noticed some unusual activity at the public dock or on the lake in front of the Blue Sea beach. Local volunteers and staff from ABV des 7, working under the direction of Sébastien Duchesne of Duchesne Environment, were preparing and unfurling large jute tarps, pre-folded in accordion style, over beds of dense Eurasian milfoil.

Before the tarps were put into the water, they were loaded onto a specially designed platform, attached to a pontoon boat, where approximately 30 black polyethylene bags of crushed stone were tied to the tarps at very specific locations to help them sink into the water. These bags – 2,800 of them – were filled by hand with crushed stone at Carrière Tremblay by local volunteers. The crushed stone was supplied free of charge by Carrière Tremblay owner, Mario Tremblay.

In early June, the Association ordered 11,550 m<sup>2</sup> of jute (the maximum then available) in pre-folded bales of 52 individual tarps. In late June, ABV des 7, the agency responsible for overseeing the project and ensuring it is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Government of Quebec, re-located and re-measured milfoil beds in areas already identified and determined that they comprised a total area of 11,457 m<sup>2</sup> (see table). This presented the Association with a dilemma, as it is unrealistic to expect to be able to adequately cover all of this milfoil without acquiring substantially more jute.



### **A Challenging Process**

Making 100' x 24' sheets of lightweight burlap sink into 6 - 15 feet of water so they rest properly over the targeted plants is not a straightforward exercise. It requires practice and delicate manoeuvring of the vessel towing the tarps as well as highly coordinated work by the volunteers guiding them into the water.



Factors such as wind and waves, or the wake of a passing boat, can easily disrupt the process. Once the tarp is lowered it has to be positioned using long poles and then further weighed down with bags in order to cover the milfoil to the maximum extent.

The pontoon boat and a zodiac as well as floating platforms and other equipment were transported by Duchesne from Trois-Rivières and assembled on site. Then, in order to find the most efficient and effective way of preparing and laying down the tarps, a number of trial deployments and adjustments had to be made using both this equipment and boats supplied by local volunteers. All of this work took place in late June and early July. Although an initial completion date of July 25th soon proved to be overly optimistic, by mid-July the process had found its groove and, by the time the project took a two-week pause on July 31st, 36 of the 52 tarps had been laid.

The project resumed on August 17 in Messines, where three beds have been identified to be covered. As well, the Association was able to access additional jute tarps, so purchased another 20, in order to cover as many of the targeted milfoil as possible before the end of the summer.



#### Monospecific Milfoil Beds Designated by ABV des 7 for the Jute Project

Date	No	Location	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	%
<b>Blue Sea</b>				
26-06	1.1	Left of public dock	615	
26-06	1.2	In front and right of public dock	1 634	
26-06	2.1	Public beach	4 490	
26-06	3.1	Raymond Lacroix Marina	771	
26-06	3.2	Raymond Lacroix Marina	113	
Sub-total Blue Sea			<b>7 622</b>	66,5
<b>Messines</b>				
17-07	36	To right of public dock	2 686	
17-07	37	In front of airport hangar	318	
17-07	40	"Auberge des Pins" bay	832	
Sub-total Messines			<b>3 836</b>	33,5
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>11 458</b>	100

1. Date of measurement this year. Milfoil beds have changed in size and location over the years. The beds identified were initially measured at 10,537 m<sup>2</sup> in 2016, then 18,015 m<sup>2</sup> in 2018 (and subsequently recalculated to 8,627 m<sup>2</sup>) and - this year - at 11,458. The bed initially identified to the left of the Messines public dock proved to be unsuitable this year; it no longer meets the "monospecific" criteria. As a result, three nearby monospecific milfoil beds were chosen instead.

As noted in the above table, the larger concentrations of milfoil in high traffic areas are at the Blue Sea end of the lake. This is likely due to a combination of currents, prevailing winds, water depth, and boat traffic.





## Thanks for the Local Support



Carrying out such a complex project would not have been possible without the help of volunteers and local support. We are grateful that so many of you have stepped up to help. Individual cases are worth highlighting. Chris Shires was present with his specially purposed barge-boat for several days as we got organized. Richard Dugal and Gab McConnery helped photograph the process with their drones. Jeremie Alexander and his mother, Sylvie Turnbull, devoted several days to help on the boat. Other volunteers included Dick, Rose, and Jennifer Ryan who filled, tied, and palletted 2,100 plastic bags. Association board members also helped in various ways.

We are very pleased that this project attracted the interest and help of young people and newcomers to Blue Sea as they have become aware of the threats to the local environment. The jute tarp project provided a tangible way for them to contribute. This augurs well for the future.

## What's Next?

Depositing the jute tarps over the designated milfoil beds is the first part of this project. The next part, which will unfold over the next four years, is the monitoring and evaluation of the results. Will the jute successfully smother the milfoil and allow the lake bottom to return to its natural state? Will the milfoil come back? If so, over what period? Will we observe a reduction in the general propagation of this invasive plant in Blue Sea Lake, especially in the areas of high boat traffic? Does this represent a sustainable and cost-effective method of controlling invasive species such as milfoil on our lakes? What other lessons can we learn from this experiment?

Beginning in the fall, the biologists at ABV des 7 will inspect and report on the results of this exercise. In 2021, the polyethylene bags will be removed from the lake. Formal monitoring will occur in years 2021, 2023, and 2025. The Association will share the results and lessons learnt as we receive them.

There is considerable interest, beyond Blue Sea Lake, in the work we are doing. On July 23rd, we invited local politicians and media to an official launch (which was limited because of Covid-19 restrictions). The local MNA, Robert Bussi res, as well as representatives from the municipalities and other Associations, were there to see a demonstration of how the jute tarps are deployed and to learn more about the project.

The purpose of this exercise is to learn how we can better control our own milfoil problem and to share this knowledge with government officials, the broader research community, and other lake associations who have similar concerns. It is in this spirit that we embarked upon this project.

## We Need your Financial Support Now

Carrying out this project has been the top priority of our members since 2016. It represents a major financial commitment by the Association. While we have benefited from a \$60,000 contribution from the Quebec Government under the ROBVQ Affluent Maritime program and support from our local municipalities of Blue Sea and Messines, there remain significant costs to be financed in order to complete the deployment of the tarps and conduct the follow-up evaluations that will determine if this is a viable and cost-effective method of controlling invasive species such as Eurasian Milfoil in our lakes and waterways.

So, if you have the means, and care about the future of our lake and watershed, now is the time to make a significant donation to the





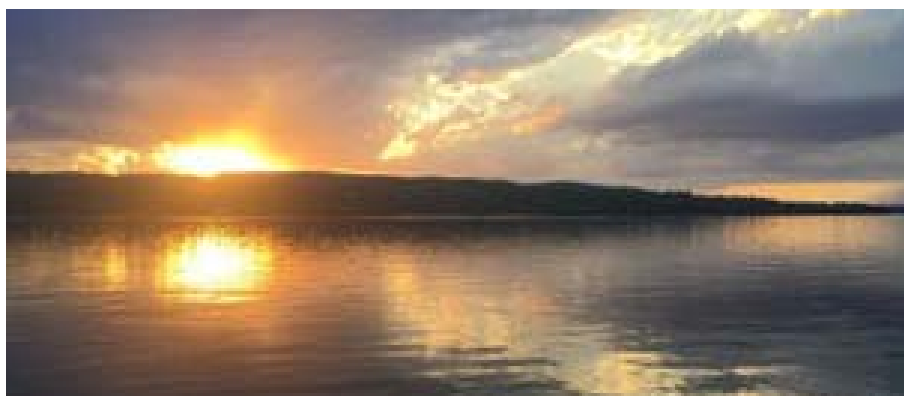
Association. Remember, the Association is a registered charity, so your donation is eligible for a taxable deduction.

If you are considering such a donation and have questions regarding the project or the work of the Association, please get in touch with Francis LeBlanc, President of the Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association, at (613) 697-8864 or by email at [francisleblanc@rogers.com](mailto:francisleblanc@rogers.com).

### **A Virtual AGM?**

As you know, the Association has had to cancel its Annual General Meeting, originally scheduled to take place at the Municipal Hall in Messines on Saturday, July 25th. With Covid-19 restrictions in place, it is unlikely that an in-person AGM can take place anytime soon.

The Board of Directors is exploring alternatives, including conducting the AGM virtually using Zoom technology. We would be interested in knowing if you would be comfortable attending the meeting using such a format and when would be the best time (week-end or week-day; morning, afternoon, or evening) for such a meeting. Please drop us a line at [info@associationblueseas.org](mailto:info@associationblueseas.org) with your thoughts.



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*Shorelines* is a production of the Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association.

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