LPC - 2026 Weed Harvesting Program Report

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Weed harvesting allows us to remove eight times (8x) more nutrients from our lake than Mother Nature puts into it each year. It is a long-term, cost-effective, and eco-friendly way to achieve our overall lake preservation goal.

From 2024 through 2026, based on Association funding limitations, weed harvesting has been the only affordable means to remove significant quantities of nutrient-rich biomass from our lake. (Note: Using Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) to remove aggressive invasive weed beds every three (3) years is also part of this program.)

The first Aquatic Plant Management (APM) lake weed harvesting campaign this season (June 8th–10th, 2026) was stopped early (at 25.5 / 40 hours) because of low productivity. The total harvest for that effort was 38 tons of material.

The second (56-hour) weed harvesting campaign was performed at the end of July. Biomass removal was primarily heavy Chara algae (bogs and muck). One cubic yard of muck-laden Chara algae weighs 2,198 pounds (lbs). This is barely lighter than water, so it floats. For comparison, a cubic yard (CY) of cut weeds is 415 lbs. Cut weeds weigh 5.3 times less than muck by volume. Muck is 5.3x heavier. With the heavier biomass, and using 14.4 hours of 'banked' harvesting time from the first campaign, the yield for the second weed harvesting campaign was 637 tons.

The third (56-hour) weed harvesting campaign was conducted over five days, September 14th–18th. The large floating Chara bogs seen in July and August were notably absent, and weed growth was lower in the water compared to earlier in the season. APM removed 7,340 cubic feet (CF) of cut weed biomass. This is roughly 272 cubic yards (CY), weighing over 56 tons.

Adding this to the 675 tons from our first two campaigns gave us a total biomass removal quantity of 731 tons. Using our standard calculations, the total amount of harvested weeds for 2026 was 28 truckloads, versus our (randomly assigned) weed harvesting program goal of 30 truckloads.

Without judging this as a win or a loss, we can all agree that this is 700 tons of biomass that will be fertilizing food crops at the Henke Farm in 2027 and not promoting new lake weed and Chara algae growth in Silver Springs Lake.

Weed Harvesting Program Scheduling Adjustments for 2027:

Silver Springs Lake presented a new challenge this year: shoreline Chara algae bog deposition. Responding to Lake Board member and resident requests, the LPC investigated various on-call Chara bog removal and shoreline maintenance service options.

A nine-page reference document summarizing locally available service provider options for the removal of Chara bogs from resident shorelines was presented to the Lake Board for review. Board President Bryan Sowatzke prepared a one-page service provider summary table for quick reference, which will be posted to the Association website. Only one (1) service option will be implemented by the Association.

The LPC recommended changes to the 2027 weed-harvesting program schedule to help address shoreline Chara bog deposition. Conducting five (5) weed harvesting campaigns during the peak season rather than three (3) will allow the weed harvesters to collect floating Chara algae bogs before they sink and before they permanently deposit themselves on residential shorelines. The five (5) proposed 2027 campaigns would be scheduled to occur two (2) weeks apart from each other through the peak growing season and would each be shorter in duration (30 hours) to reduce cost.

To do this, the Lake Preservation Committee (LPC) members will need help mapping weed beds and floating Chara bogs. We are already burdened with weed mapping and program management for three (3) campaigns. Increasing from three (3) to five (5) campaigns is more work than we can bear. Please volunteer to help when asked!

Each year, lake weed growth patterns change in response to weather patterns and our weed harvesting activity. Without regard to the new floating Chara algae bog deposition issue, weed growth was less troublesome for pontoon navigation in 2026 than it was in 2024 and 2025.

With increased harvesting time and three (3) harvesting campaigns conducted by Aquatic Plant Management (APM) this season, most of the lake weeds remained below propeller level. LPC members view this as a sign that the weed harvesting program is working, and we hope that this trend continues.

Utilizing a perennial weed harvesting program to remove nutrient-rich biomass from the lake will slow, stop, and reverse geologic lake aging over a period of decades.

Harvesting weeds from all of the navigable areas in our lake will preserve its recreational boating, fishing, and swimming value. For 2027, we hope that APM will be able to remove floating Chara bogs before they deposit themselves on residents' shorelines.

Lake Preservation Committee members will continue to post 'best practices' information for shoreline maintenance and will also be posting shoreline maintenance service provider information and offers to consider for 2027.

Respectfully submitted by David Lester
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