

2020 MAWD Project of the Year

Pelican River Watershed - Flowering Rush -Coordinated Research & Adaptive Management Project

In 1976, a Flowering rush (FR) infestation was documented in Curfman Lake in Becker County, and spread through the Pelican River chain into Detroit, Muskrat, Sallie, Melissa, Mill Pond, and Buck Lakes. By the mid-1980's, FR reached nuisance conditions in the near shore areas. The first FR management efforts included handdigging, deflowering, limited chemical treatments and mechanical harvesting. However, by 2000, it was evident control efforts were failing, FR was spreading, and little was known about the biology, ecological impacts, or effective control methods.

In 2010, the Pelican River Watershed District contacted various agencies and institutions to begin a coordinated applied science research effort to understand the biology and ecology of FR and build upon this knowledge base to eventually develop effective herbicide control measures. Research was costly, over \$425,000, but over 250 acres of near-shore FR and 60 acres of mixed stand bulrush/FR has been treated successfully due to the project.

Area lakes have almost fully returned to their pre-Flowering Rush state, with native plant growth and hard sandy lake bottoms restored, and recreational activities are again enjoyed uninhibited by the invasive plant. The milelong public beach on Detroit Lake, which draws thousands of visitors each summer and is an economic force in the area, has returned to its full glory with a hard, sandy bottom enjoyed by swimmers and boaters.

