



# CLEAR THINKING

CLEARLAKECONSERVANCY.ORG

JULY 2021 | ISSUE NO.38

## OUR LETTER

## CLEAR LAKE PREPARES FOR BATTLE

The heart of the Conservancy's mission leads to water quality and land projects.

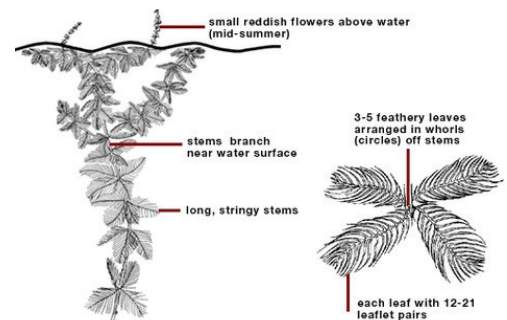
We want to update everyone on three important projects, beginning with the Aquatic Vegetation Management Project covered below. Following that, you'll learn about the Cyrus Brouse Clean Stream Project at Settlers Wetland Nature Preserve and the completion of the Brennan Woods Trail. Every project aims to keep the water in and around Clear Lake clean and healthy and to get all of us into our beautiful natural environment.

Last summer, our office was alerted to an increased presence of plant life in Clear Lake. We heard from many that the "weeds were out of control!" After a plane ride with Bill Geiger and studying drone shots from Connor Oiler, the Conservancy moved to action!

Members of our Water Quality Committee collected a sample and shipped it to Dr. Robin Scribailo at Purdue University. The presence of the invasive and non-native Eurasian watermilfoil (EW) was confirmed. (Pictured Below)

Following the process in place from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), earlier this spring we engaged a contractor to complete an Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan (AVMP). This necessary step prior to permitted treatment was kicked off in May and completed earlier this month. The findings will help us understand the presence and location of plant life and help guide our next steps.

Based on the results, and pending a permit from the IDNR and project funding, treatment will begin in 2022, as the window for treatment this year has passed.



In the meantime, here are a few tips on how you can best manage the EW this summer while discouraging continued spread. Because EW spreads by fragmentation, avoid fragmenting the plant! If you must rake and remove plants, be sure to remove the small floating pieces. If your seawall has large mats of floating plant debris, consider removing that plant debris.

Disposal is key! Plant debris can be used as compost in your landscaping or garden. If that is not an option for you, take the material to the drop-off location off of SR 120, near the Fremont Water Treatment Facility. But definitely do not "dump" any plant material in the deep pockets of Clear Lake.

A healthy lake will always have "weeds" and in fact, native aquatic vegetation is essential to a healthy fish population. Our native plants do not typically form thick mats like EW and therefore create fewer problems for recreation.

Many thanks to the Clear Lake Association and an anonymous donor for supporting the survey work. As we all enjoy the summer season, remind your friends and neighbors that the Conservancy is aware of the increased plant growth, and we are working through the process to improve it!

We look forward to seeing you outside and are incredibly grateful for the generous support we receive from you and from the Clear Lake Township community.



**Karen Horrell**  
President



**Bridget Harrison**  
Executive Director

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Program Assistant

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Land Steward

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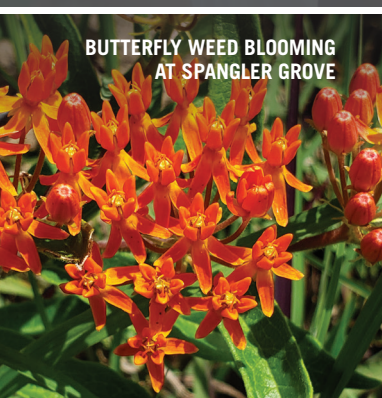
Finance

Lands

Outreach & Education

Water Quality

BUTTERFLY WEED BLOOMING  
AT SPANGLER GROVE





# SETTLING FOR THE BEST

*One of many  
Conservancy  
projects...  
necessary to  
improve the  
water clarity in  
Clear Lake.*

While the increased plant growth covered on the front page is a newer issue, Water Quality at Clear Lake has been on our minds for years.

In an effort organized and led by volunteer members of the Water Quality Committee, we've collected data for over a decade on the county-regulated ditches flowing into Clear Lake and on the lake itself. Results indicate a decrease in water clarity shown in the Clear Lake Secchi depth readings and an increase in nutrient levels. **In total, 12 feet of sight depth has been lost over 25 years at an average of ~ 6 inches per year.**

To begin reversing this trajectory, we launched the Cyrus Brouse Clean Stream Project in 2019 to install a two-stage ditch on the west bank of the Cyrus Brouse ditch at our Settlers Wetland Nature Preserve. You likely saw the big equipment south of 120 this spring and summer! The two-stage ditch creates a "bench" to allow water flow during heavy rain events to slow down and spread out, giving suspended nutrients like phosphorous or nitrogen a chance to settle out. During large rain events, the two-stage ditch will overflow into a constructed wetland, allowing suspended solids to settle out and encouraging the up-take of nutrients by water-loving plants.

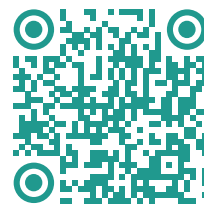
This best management practice (BMP) is one of many Conservancy projects, and part of a combined community effort, that will be necessary to improve the water clarity in Clear Lake.

We appreciate the support of the project given by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Lake & River Enhancement Program, the Danny & Bill Fund held at the Steuben County Community Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NiSource Foundation and NIPSCO, and an anonymous donor.

Settlers Wetland Nature Preserve is closed to the public. However, if you would like to see the completed project, please contact our office. We are happy to provide tours!

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR ADDITIONAL PROJECT DETAIL & PHOTOS

SCAN THE  
QR CODE



# A WONDEROUS WOODLAND WALK

We are ecstatic to share that our loop trail in Brennan Woods is complete! In late June, 21 Conservancy friends and members of Forever Improving Steuben County Together (FIST) came together to complete the trail building project. The philanthropic youth group associated with the Steuben County Community Foundation also provided a grant for supplies.

With rakes, wheelbarrows, and lots of energy the group lined and mulched the trail sections on each end of our new boardwalk. A small group split off to build steps down a steep slope to the boardwalk. Another small group tackled the removal of mullein, a non-native plant that is scattered throughout the woods. We used our handy John Deere Gator to haul loads of mulch and bags of rock to the work site.

Take a walk with family and friends on the newly finished trail in Brennan Woods! Use the time to catch up on life while checking out nature in our 46-acre nature preserve. Research from a 2019 study\* concluded that spending only 20 minutes in nature reduces levels of stress hormones significantly. And who doesn't need a little less stress!

## CELEBRATE THE HARD WORK OF MANY VOLUNTEERS

Mark your calendar! Join us on Sunday, July 25 at 11 am to celebrate the hard work of many volunteers who helped complete this project and the generous support from several donors. Join our new Land Steward, Elizabeth Strick, for an educational hike to learn more about our largest property, The Clear Lake Nature Preserve & Brennan Woods.

\*SOURCE: Hedblom, Gunnarsson, et al., [www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-46099-7](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-46099-7)



**VOLUNTEERS BUILDING STEPS DOWN TO THE BOARDWALK**



**VOLUNTEERS CREATING NEW TRAIL**

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

### Anonymous (2)

**William and Carol Berning**

**Don and Beth Bieberich**

**James and Lynda Bradley**

**Alan and Emma Brown**

**Dick and Nedine Buchhop**

**Carson and Donna Cochran**

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H: Janet Close**

**Anonymous  
H: Bridget Harrison and Dave Drogos**

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**Jack and Karen Horrell**

**Terry and Koggy Newcomb**

**Deborah and Erik Oiler**

**Nancy and Bob Webster**

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**Rick and Joyce Eckert**

**GRANT SUPPORT  
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**Forever Improving Steuben County Together**

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**PayPal Giving Fund**

**IN-KIND  
The Boathouse Boutique**

**Moody & Crew**

\*List reflects contributions since our May issue of Clear Thinking. Contact us if you see a mistake.



THE CLEAR LAKE TOWNSHIP LAND CONSERVANCY  
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[clearlakeconservancy.org](http://clearlakeconservancy.org)

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*"Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time."*

— KATRINA MAYER

## MISSION STATEMENT

We preserve, protect,  
& manage the natural  
environment within the  
Clear Lake Watershed  
and Township for  
future generations.

**VOLUNTEER | CONTACT | DONATE**

[clearlakeconservancy.org](http://clearlakeconservancy.org)  
or call (260) 527-1072



## COMMUNITY EVENT



**Love the Loop  
Brennan Woods Trail Celebration**

**WHEN:**  
Sunday, July 25  
11:00 AM

**WHERE:**  
Clear Lake Nature Preserve  
& Brennan Woods