

## ABSTRACT

### *Lagarosiphon major* in Lough Corrib – Management Options

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The highly aggressive submerged aquatic plant species *Lagarosiphon major* (Curly leaved waterweed) was recorded from nine sites in Lough Corrib, the second largest lake in Ireland, in 2005. One year later the plant had spread to 24 separate locations throughout the upper and middle lake and posed problems for amenity exploitation, principally wild brown trout fishing. Following a major survey in 2007, the plant had been positively identified from 64 locations. The largest plant stand occupies *circa* 16 hectares in Rinneroon Bay, north of Oughterard. It is noteworthy that no *Lagarosiphon* has yet been recorded from the lower lake.

Where *Lagarosiphon* has established large plant stands, no indigenous plants survive beneath the dense canopy cover. Thus, the lush Charophyte meadows for which many of the sheltered bays in Lough Corrib are famous are at risk of being eliminated. With an altered macrophyte community, it is probable that the associated macroinvertebrate and fish communities will also be impacted. Preliminary surveys to quantify this impact are currently being undertaken on the lake.

In order to explore a range of weed control methods that might prove useful in limiting the spread of *Lagarosiphon* in the lake, and possibly eradicating it altogether, a number of pilot trials were undertaken in Rinneroon Bay in December 2006 and January 2007. Methods trialled included the use of the granular herbicide dichlobenil, mechanical cutting using deep-cutting V-blades, hand removal using scuba divers, suction dredging and light occlusion using submerged geotextile. Because of the success achieved using mechanical cutting, this trial was extended in September 2007. On this occasion, a section of bay measuring *circa* 4 hectares was treated.

Based on ongoing research efforts on *Lagarosiphon* in Lough Corrib and following extensive consultations with international experts, a management programme for the lake is currently being formulated. If adequate funding is provided to the project, there is reason to be hopeful that we will bring *Lagarosiphon* under control and eradicate it from large sectors of the lake.