

ABSTRACT & BIOGRAPHY

Update on the *Lagarosiphon* management programme on Lough Corrib

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Lough Corrib is the second largest lake in Ireland. It is of major conservation importance and supports 14 habitats and six species that are listed on Annex I and Annex II, respectively, of the Habitats Directive. The lake is a nationally important angling resource and a major tourist angling destination. Since the recent discovery of the highly invasive submerged plant species, *Lagarosiphon major*, its rapid advance throughout the northern basin of the lake has demonstrated its potential to compromise the environmental, social and economic value of this unique natural resource. In this paper we describe the research being undertaken on Lough Corrib to develop methods that will effectively control and management of *Lagarosiphon*.

A number of approaches are being investigated to control this aggressive plant. A recently purchased weed cutting boat is operation in the Upper Lake, supported by an OPW-owned weed harvester. A bottom-cutting V-blade is the principal cutting mechanism. This applies a cut at or below lake bed level and maximised the trauma caused to the plant. This method is currently strategically targeting the more heavily infested northern bays. Every effort is being made to halt the southerly spread of the plant into the Lower Lake. To date, no *Lagarosiphon* has been recorded in this large expanse of water. Beds of the weed that occupy the Middle Lake have been identified, demarcated by scuba divers and covered with a biodegradable henna geotextile. This aims to exclude incident light from the plant and bring about its demise. These approaches have been supplemented by the targeted, small-scale applications of herbicide.

Extensive research into the functional ecology of *Lagarosiphon* is ongoing and seeks to identify any weak link in the life-cycle of the plant that can be specifically targeted for subsequent control.

Biography

Stephanie Evers graduated from Glasgow University in 2008 with a doctorate the areas of Aquatic Ecology and Botany. She has been working for the Central Fisheries Board since June 2008 and is based on Lough Corrib undertaking research projects and management programmes exploring the effective control of *Lagarosiphon*.