



August 2022

A key milestone was reached on July 12th when the Counties approved both the construction budget and the operations / maintenance assessment. With these pieces in place, complemented by the \$200 Million Grant, **the construction phase for Secord moves forward** (funding is required to obtain many essential permits).

At this point, the Secord Lake Association (SLA) is focused on what is needed over the next 18 months to prepare Secord Lake to return. There is planning work underway on weed / tree control and removal. **We seek volunteers to help prepare the Lake for its return.**

We applaud the individual efforts of property owners to manage the area in front of their places. We believe by working together we can accomplish more, and some property owners seek an overall plan for Secord Lake.

Weed control has always been the responsibility of the lake. This was true when Boyce Hydro owned the dam and is the case moving forward. While the FLTF provides guidance regarding weed / tree management; their mission is to restore the dams. As a volunteer organization, the Secord Lake Association is partnering with the townships to develop and implement a plan for Secord Lake. We are in contact with the Michigan DNR to determine their plans for the property they own and manage (Park Steet boat launch as an example).

We do not have all the answers, simply because we do not know all of the questions. This is a learning process for all of us. We believe that by working together we can accomplish more than by working as individuals.

We receive a lot of questions pertaining to weed / tree control on Secord Lake. The following answers / comments are provided from input by the SLA, the Townships and PLM, our Secord Lake weed management partner. This provides a high-level summary:

1) With the lake drawn down, why treat the aquatic weeds?

The aquatic weeds continue to grow and need to be managed. Imagine an uncontrolled aquatic weed mass growing and then having 10 feet of water applied to the top of it when the Lake is restored. The unchecked weeds will quickly grow to fill in the 10 feet of water causing the Lake to “choke out” making boat traffic nearly impossible. Weed choked lakes are not conducive to fish and other wildlife.

Secord and Clement Townships have managed and continue to manage this weed growth with periodic treatments by PLM. Bourret Township is expected to begin treatments in 2023. The goal is to keep the weeds managed during the drawdown to position the Lake for the return of full water in 2024.

2) What about the non-aquatic weeds and trees growing on the exposed lakebed? The areas around the shore, the mud flats and sand bars?

After the drawdown, as property owners we were encouraged to plant grass or let weeds grow to help manage shoreline erosion. The need for grass and weeds with their roots systems to help manage erosion is still a best practice. We do not recommend the removal of the grass / weeds as their root systems provide benefits. These grasses and weeds will die when they are covered with water. Property owners are encouraged to manage the growth of this grass / weeds by mowing or using a string trimmer. Maintain the root system to aid with erosion.

A new development is the emergence of Willow and Cottonwood trees. These trees are fast growing, are a nuisance now, and will be an ongoing nuisance when the water returns.



This is an example of a Secord Lake front property. One can see the 4 to 6-foot trees in the before photo. The after photo shows the removal of the trees and grass / weeds in place to continue to manage erosion.

While one could simply cut the trees off close to the ground, the issue is the “spike” or “stake” left behind. These are wood and the spikes can remain causing a hazard to unsuspecting waders and swimmers when the water returns.

We encourage these trees be pulled up by their roots near swimming areas in front of properties and on the local community sandbars.



Let’s review at the high level how the “trees” are being addressed:

The SLA, Townships and PLM have identified areas of the lake that need to be maintained. These tend to be larger areas of flats and common community sand bar areas. At this point there are two paths being explored:

Option 1: Experienced contractors have toured the areas and have been provided detail regarding the estimated acreage that needs to be addressed. These contractors utilize mechanical methods to cut the trees and weeds. Bids are being sought at this time. Should this plan be executed, work will need to be paid for by township(s) weed funds, donations from individuals and the SLA Secord Restoration Fund.

Option 2: The SLA, Townships and PLM have submitted for required permits to apply the same treatment to the nuisance Willow and Cottonwood Trees on the areas identified as is used to treat the aquatic weeds (only at a more concentrated treatment). This treatment will kill the trees and allow volunteers to pull the trees out to remove the root system. The plan has the treatment in late August / September with volunteers working over the winter and into the spring.

It is not possible or feasible to implement either Option A or B for the entire Lake. The goal is to focus on large community areas known as sand bars or pontoon alley. There may be a combination of the two options to treat appropriate areas of the lake.

Property owners can manage their lake frontage area now. Removing the Willow and Cottonwood trees by pulling them out by the root in swimming / boating areas is suggested. In some areas, cutting the tree as close to the lake bottom as possible may be appropriate.

People have asked how to dispose of the trees once they are removed. They can be burned in your campfire; or bundled up with twine for removal as yard waste by the trash collector. In some cases, should appropriate property be available, with the owner's permission, they can be piled to create habitat for small animals as they decay. It is best not to leave the trees on the lakebed as the wood will float to the surface when the water returns.

Property owners can remove the trees and will want to maintain some weeds or grass, so their root system helps with erosion management. Once trees are removed, some property owners can mow the area with a mower at a high setting and others simply use string trimmer to manage the weeds while keeping the trees from emerging again.

Lake Debris

While we do not think of Secord Lake as having debris issues like Sanford and Wixom, we do have some challenges to address. Large trees have been identified up near the Rope Swing and in the areas known as "State Land". These large trees are on the dry lakebed now, but it is believed will begin to move once the returned water allows them to float. The SLA and the Townships are conducting a survey to determine where volunteer groups will be needed in the winters of 2022-23 and 2023-24 to remove these trees. If you have areas you think we should review for debris, please leave a note at SecordLakeAssociation@gmail.com

Tips, Tricks and Recommendations of Things to Do and Not to Do

The Cottonwood and Willow tree roots are easier to pull the smaller the tree. For larger trees, using a garden tool to loosen around the root makes it easier. Think of this as a big dandelion.

Help your neighbors - - - removing the trees is hard, manual work. Getting a couple of people to do the work makes it go quicker. If you have elderly neighbors, please lend them a hand.

It is manual work - - - pace yourself take breaks and drink a lot of water while you work.

If you are using equipment, string trimmers, cutters, or mowers, please use caution.

Once the Cottonwood and Willow trees are removed, the ongoing maintenance with either a mower or string trimmer is much easier.

It is NOT allowed for unlicensed individuals to use herbicides near or on the lake bottoms. Remember grass and weed growth is desired as their roots aid with erosion. In addition, its simply not a good idea to introduce herbicides into the lake system.

It is NOT recommended for individuals to conduct controlled burning or create fires on the lakebed.

You CAN cut stumps, small trees, and shrubs without causing rutting or disturbance of sediment to lower injury potential or damage to boat props. Cut logs must be removed from bottomlands. STUMP ATTACHED TO THE LAKEBOTTOM CANNOT BE REMOVED WITHOUT A PERMIT FROM EGLE.

If you live on a cut, having a neighborhood or cut plan can help everyone out. It is important to determine if you have Cottonwood trees growing in your cut. Homeowners are responsible for to clear property from their seawall. While it would be nice to have all the cuts treated like some of the areas in the lake, this is simply not possible for several reasons. If you seek help and advice to put together a neighborhood plan, this is an area the Secord Lake Association in combination with the townships may be able to help. The only way these areas will be addressed is by the adjoining property owners keeping the Secord Lake Association and their Townships informed. The terrestrial weeds will die when the water comes back in 2024. The Cottonwoods will continue to grow 6 ft a year. The trees are our primary concern. Where people or pets will jump into the water, the new growth trees must be pulled or cut below the lake bottom.

Property owners can remove the trees and will want to maintain some weeds or grass, so their root system helps with erosion management. Once trees are removed, some property owners can mow the area with a mower at a high setting and others simply use string trimmer to manage the weeds while keeping the trees from emerging again.

In Closing

The Secord Lake Association is a volunteer group of Secord Lake property owners committed to getting Secord Lake returned safely and as soon as possible. As property owners we call Secord Lake home and look forward to its return

We invested significant time to help secure the funding grants for construction and worked with the counties to get the special assessment in place to allow construction to begin.

As property owners, our reality is we need to be actively engaged to prepare Secord Lake for its return. It is up to us to understand the challenges and develop plans to solve the problems. No one will do it for us. We seek help and understanding as this type of restoration is new to all of us. If you have ideas or want to help, we want to hear to from you.

As we pivot our focus to get Secord Lake READY to return, we will continue to reach out to the Secord Lake community. We believe that TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE. The work to prepare Secord Lake for water will take coordination and volunteers.

You can learn more at: [FOUR LAKES TASK FORCE - Four Lakes Task Force \(www.four-lakes-taskforce-mi.com\)](http://www.four-lakes-taskforce-mi.com)
[Secord Lake | Secord Lake Association | Restoring Secord \(www.secordlakeassociation.org\)](http://www.secordlakeassociation.org)

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