



Starry Stonewort Collaborative Overview

Starry Stonewort (SSW, *Nitellopsis obtusa*) is an aquatic invasive macroalgae from Eurasia that closely resembles a vascular plant. It invades lakes, ponds, and slow-moving water bodies where it attaches to the sediment using rhizoids and grows to 2m (Kipp et al., 2017).

The first occurrence of SSW was documented in 1978 in the St. Lawrence River between New York state and Ontario, Canada. Ballast water is the prime suspect for entry and subsequent spread throughout the Great Lakes basin (GLB).

Left unchecked SSW will cause harm to natural environmental systems and inhibit use of waterways, which can potentially result in economic impacts.

With funding from the Environmental Protection Agency Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, The Starry Stonewort Collaborative for the Great Lakes Basin is designed to enhance the capacity of experts, resource managers and local stakeholders to address starry stonewort infestations.

Working with partners from across the region, we are amassing any current information available and disseminate what is known about SSW through various outlets such as webinars, the SSW website, and social media. Further, we plan to develop a variety of tools and resources including control measures, fact sheets, and strategies to better understand SSW and control its spread.

We have engaged approximately 25 Collaborators across the GLB who we have asked to help us make connections with community level volunteers. The Collaborators will also help with communication and data exchange to help support the program. For assistance guiding the program, we work with a small group of Expert Panelists who provide valuable insight, assist with informational webinars and communications, and lend their years of expertise in the areas of ecology, outreach and control techniques.

Much of the work to date for the Collaborative has been to lay a solid foundation for its growth and success. Some of the accomplishments include:

- Organizing the Collaborators and Expert Panel
- Development of the project web site which includes a library of information about Starry Stonewort and a public forum for discussions and exchange of ideas. Anticipated to be “live” by the end of October 2019 (www.starrystonewort.org)
- Engagement of stakeholders through social media (www.facebook.com/starrystonewort), and email marketing

- Ongoing webinars, conference calls and meetings with Expert Panelists, Collaborators and community scientists
- Outreach, support and training programs for citizen scientists to complete basic surveys for SSW. A goal is to expand training and surveys to mirror and support successful training programs provided by the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

A primary goal of the Collaborative is to increase the number of citizen scientists that are actively completing simple surveys to locate SSW infestations. Done repeatedly valuable information can be acquired about growth, expansion and response to control techniques. This information can then be used in rapid detection and response programs and the development of effective best management practices. Locations and descriptions of identified SSW infestations will be maintained in online databases such as the United States Geological Survey Nonindigenous Aquatic Species program (USGS-NAS) and iMapInvasives (NY and PA).



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