Communication and Notification Plan for Phragmites Management in the Long Point Region

Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service
Nature Conservancy of Canada

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1. Communication Plan

1.1. Background

Phragmites (*Phragmites australis* subspecies *australis*) has been described as Canada's worst invasive plant. It is a tall perennial grass that outcompetes native plant species causing damage to coastal wetland ecosystems in Ontario. Phragmites invasion and subsequent rapid expansion has been documented as contributing to the decline of at least 25% of Ontario's species at risk (SAR). Studies on the management of Phragmites conducted in Ontario and the United States suggest that the most effective management methods include a combination of herbicide application and mechanical management (cutting/rolling and prescribed burning). As such, Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service (ECCC-CWS) and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) ("the Project Team") will be continuing to use these combined methods to manage/eradicate Phragmites within the Long Point Region.

1.1.1 Implementation History: 2016-2023

From 2016 to 2023, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) approved an Emergency Registration (ER) of the herbicide Roundup Cusom (active ingredient: glyphosate) to manage Phragmites in wetland areas in the Long Point Region by air and/or ground application. The request for an ER for the Long Point Region was based on the observed exponential growth of Phragmites in these coastal marshes. Local biologists and scientists advised that the health of these coastal marshes was at a critical tipping point; if immediate action was not taken, the provincial, national and globally significant natural heritage values, including SAR and their critical habitats, for which these areas are recognized may be permanently lost.

The ER was granted to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry from 2016-2019 for management within the Long Point Crown Marsh, the tip of Long Point, the Long Point Company private marsh Turkey Point, the Lower Big Creek Watershed, several areas on Crown properties, and 3 small pilot areas on federal land within the Big Creek and Long Point National Wildlife Areas (NWAs).

In 2020, ECCC-CWS and the province jointly recieved approval from the PMRA to manage Phragmites at the Big Creek and Long Point NWAs. The Conservation Implementation Plan for the Long Point Walsingham Forest Priority Place, as well as the Big Creek and Long Point NWA management plans, highlight Phragmites as a major threat to the biological integrity of the areas. All three plans have a goal to manage 90% of the Phragmites within the NWAs by 2025, which includes treatment using herbicides.

ECCC-CWS received independent approval annually between 2021 and 2023 to continue *Phragmites* management on the NWAs and some adjacent, privately owned properties. The rationale for an ER was based on the serious threat that *Phragmites* poses to SAR within these sensitive wetland complexes, the safety and efficacy of the herbicide when used appropriately, and the expectation that managing *Phragmites* will result in the recovery of native vegetation and SAR habitat. The ER enabled CWS to manage large, problematic stands of Phragmites in highly sensitive areas, conduct smaller scale treatment on private lands and retreat stands that remain within the Long Point Region.

In 2021, the PMRA under the authority of the Pest Control Products Act, registered the sale and use of the herbicide Habitat Aqua (active ingredient: imazapyr) for the management of Phragmites growing in and around aquatic sites in Canada. The registration of Habitat Aqua provides another tool for the effective management of Phragmites where it occurs in an aquatic setting in non-cropland areas. This product has been applied in the region since 2021 via ground-based methods, primarily for retreatment.

1.1.2 Implementation: 2024

In 2024, the Project Team will use the herbicide Habitat Aqua to manage Phragmites on federal and adjacent private lands in the Long Point Region. Management will focus on retreatment and some primary treatment of small, sparse stands using specialized ground-based herbicide application methods.

1.2. Notification of the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit

In August of 2024, the Project Team will share project details and notification plans with the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNHU). The Project Team will continue to be in contact with the HNHU and provide updates throughout the project.

1.3. Public Information Session

Due to the use of a registered herbicide following label conditions and the comfortability of the Long Point region community with ongoing Phragmites management, an annual public information session will not be held in 2024. The Project Team will post contact information for each management site, and staff will be available to discuss project details with members of the public as requested. Up to date information will also be shared on the Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance website: www.longpointphragmites.com

2. Notification Plan

2.1. Introduction

This pesticide use notification plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Pesticides Act, 1990.

The purpose of this plan is to meet the public's general right to know about herbicide applications made to outdoor public places that are owned or controlled by public authorities. The plan allows members of the public to take action to avoid potential contact with herbicides, if they wish. The Project Team will ensure that herbicides applied to public places are done so in a safe, responsible manner, minimizing harm to the community and the environment.

This plan sets out how the Project Team will notify members of the public of herbicide applications made for the purpose of managing Phragmites in aquatic areas in the Long Point National Wildlife Area, Big Creek National Wildlife Area, and adjacent private lands within Norfolk County, between August 1st and October 31, 2024.

The plan describes:

- treatment locations;
- how and when the Project Team will provide the public and other stakeholders with information about the herbicide application;
- how the public and other stakeholders can access this plan and get more information about the Project Team's notification arrangements; and,
- contact details for anyone wishing to discuss this plan or the overall project with the Project Team.

The Project Team will be using an imazapyr-based herbicide (Habitat Aqua) to manage Phragmites in wet areas, and a glyphosate-based herbicide (RoundUp VisionMax) in dry areas, at locations within the Long Point area; specifically, the Long Point NWA, the Big Creek NWA and private lands within Norfolk County. The herbicide will be applied using ground-based methods including a hydraulic sprayer affixed to a Marsh Master or Jon Boat and a backpack sprayer.

It is anticipated that ground herbicide application will be initiated as early as August 1st, using equipment specially adapted for use in sensitive wetland habitats.

Further information on the project and herbicide use can be obtained by visiting the Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance at longpointphragmites.ca. Specific questions regarding the project can be directed to:

Project Supervisor – Phragmites Management, Heather Braun, Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service: 647-232-8495, email: heather.braun@ec.gc.ca

Project Supervisor – Ground Herbicide Application, Brett Norman, the Nature Conservancy of Canada: 226-231-0331, email: brett.norman@natureconservancy.ca

2.2. Treatment Locations

Long Point National Wildlife Area and Adjacent Private Lands

Up to 75 ha of Phragmites on the Long Point NWA and adjacent private lands have been delineated for treatment using the imazapyr-based Habitat Aqua herbicide and the glyphosate-based VisionMax herbicide. Surface water sampling will not be conducted given the use of registered herbicides.

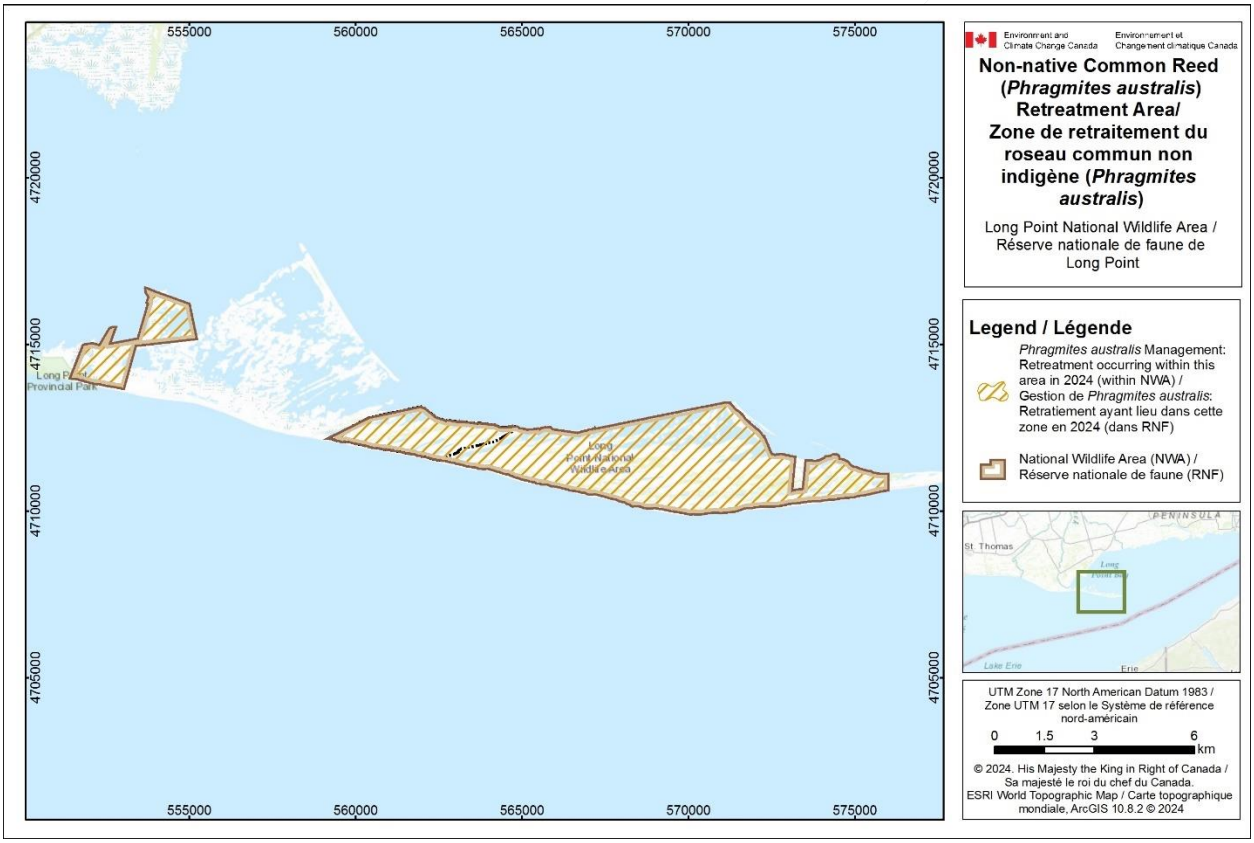


Figure 1. Anticipated re-reatment areas (orange) at the Long Point and Thoroughfare Units of the Long Point National Wildlife Area, to occur between August 15 and October 31, 2024.

Figure 2. Anticipated re-treatment sites on private lands at Long Point. Application of a very low volume of herbicide application is expected to occur between August 1 and October 31, 2024.

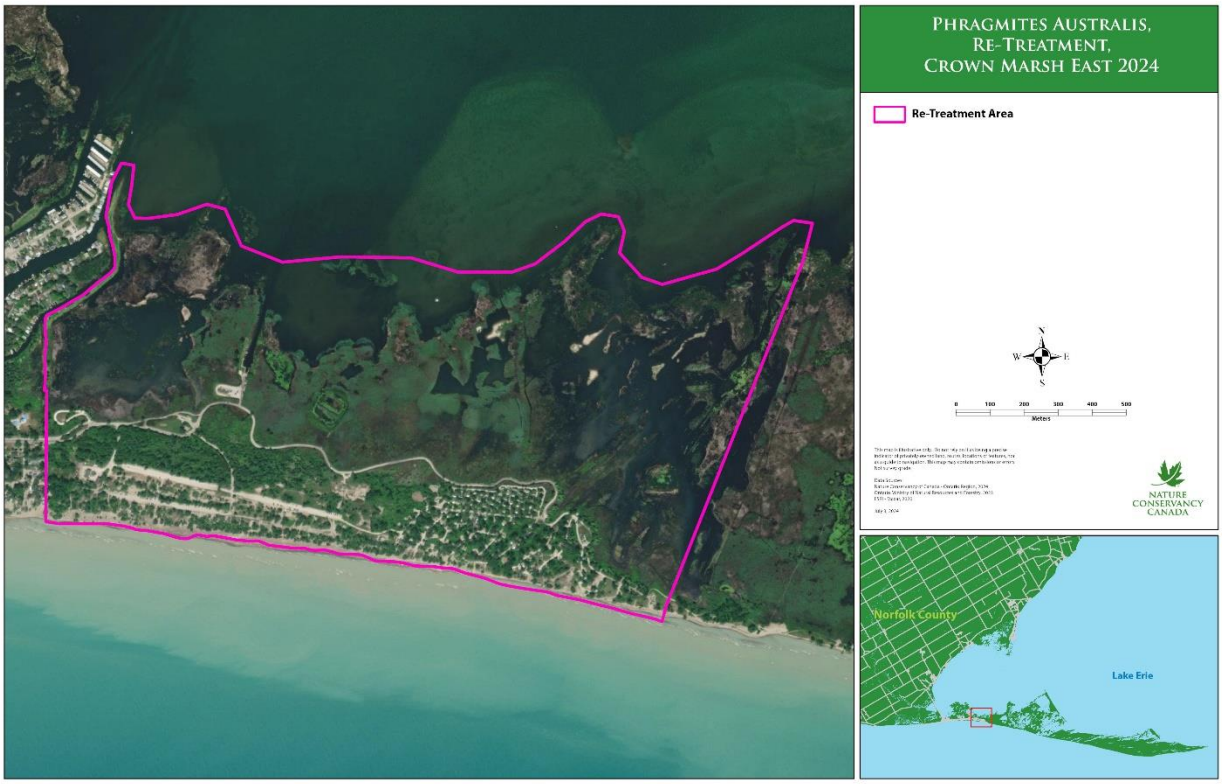


Figure 3. Anticipated re-treatment sites on Provincial lands at Long Point. Application of a very low volume of herbicide application is expected to occur between August 1 and October 31, 2024.

Big Creek Watershed, Lower Big Creek Wetland Complex, and Turkey Point Wetland complex

Up to 50 ha of Phragmites in the Lower Big Creek Watershed (Big Creek NWA and adjacent private lands) has been delineated for treatment in 2024.

Surface water sampling will not be conducted in the Big Creek watershed given the use of registered herbicides.

In the Lower Big Creek area, signs will be posted at common access points and boat launches to notify boaters, paddlers, and waterfowl hunters of the treatment (see Appendix II).

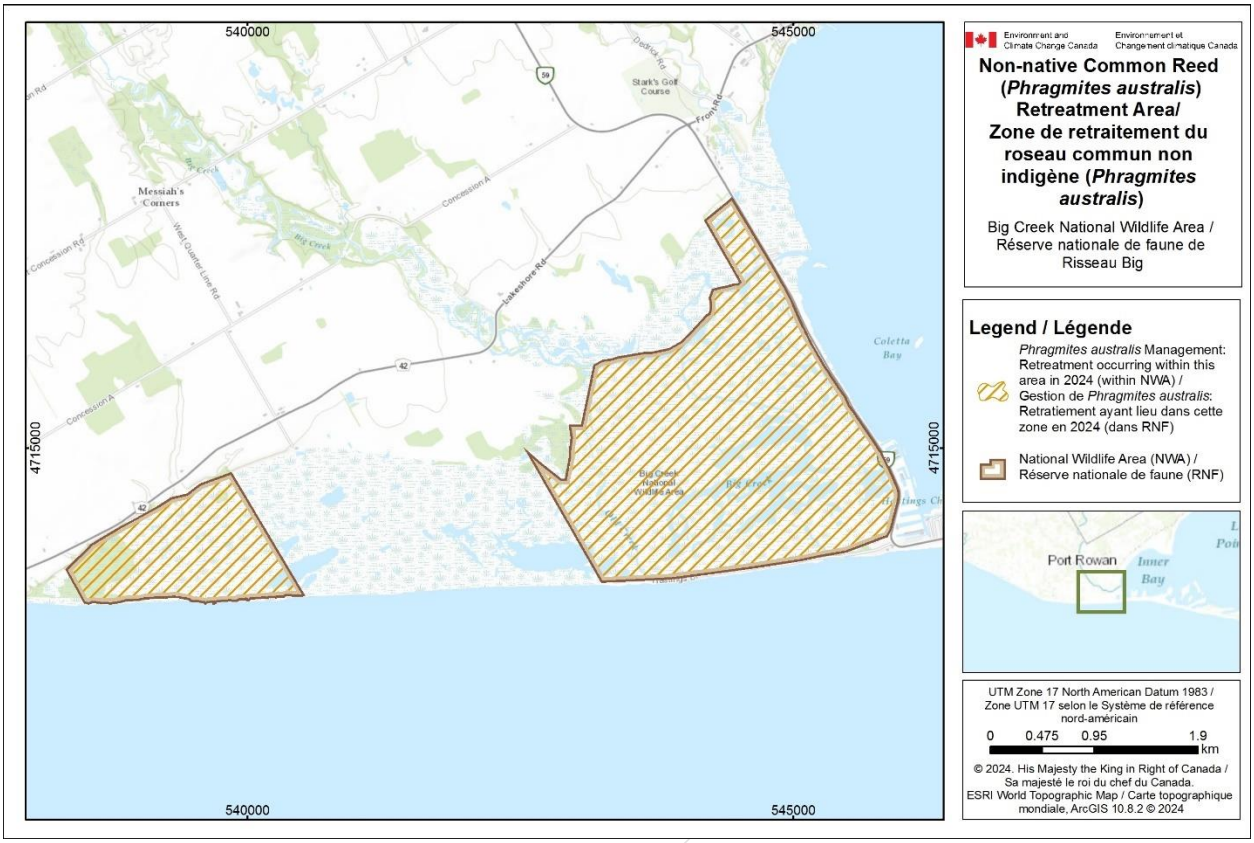


Figure 4. Potential retreatment sites at the Big Creek and Hahn Units of the Big Creek National Wildlife Area, to occur as needed between August 15 and October 31, 2024

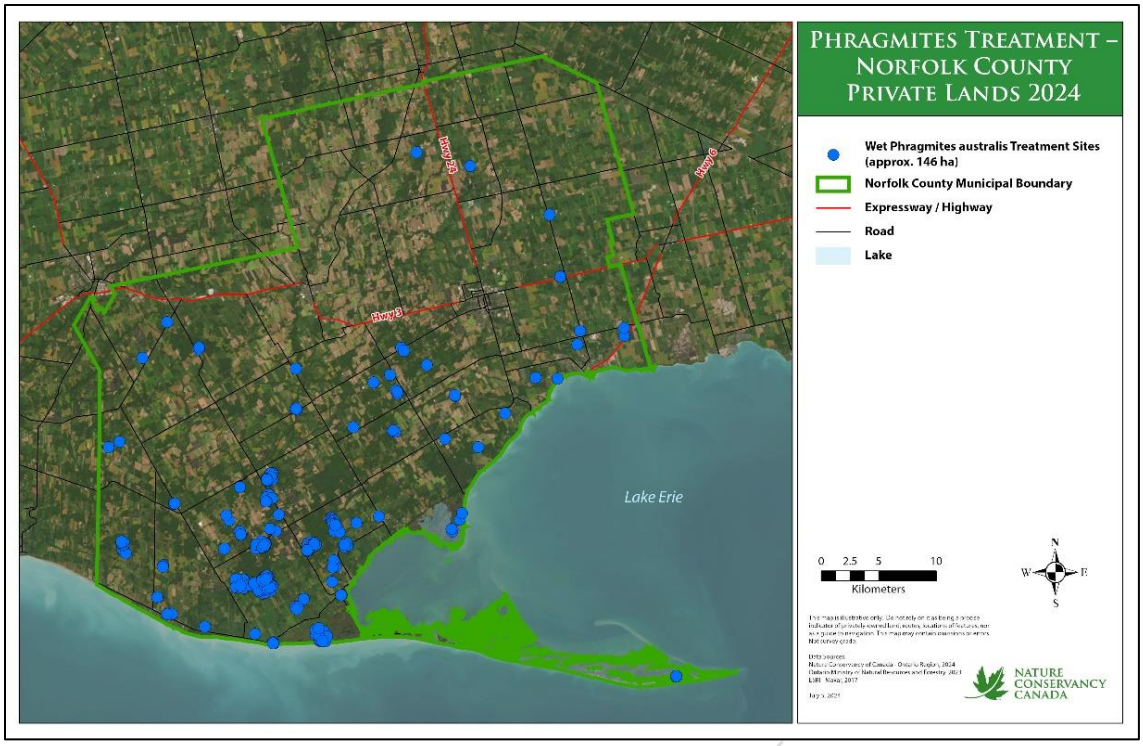


Figure 5. Anticipated re-treatment areas within the inland portion of Norfolk County. Application of a very small amount of herbicide to sites may occur between August 1 and October 31, 2024.

Figure 6. Potential re-treatment sites in the Lower Big Creek wetland complex, to occur between August 1 and October 31st, 2024. No new treatment planned for this area in 2024.

Figure 7. Potential re-treatment sites in the Lower Big Creek wetland complex, to occur between August 1 and October 31st, 2024. No new treatment planned for this area in 2024.

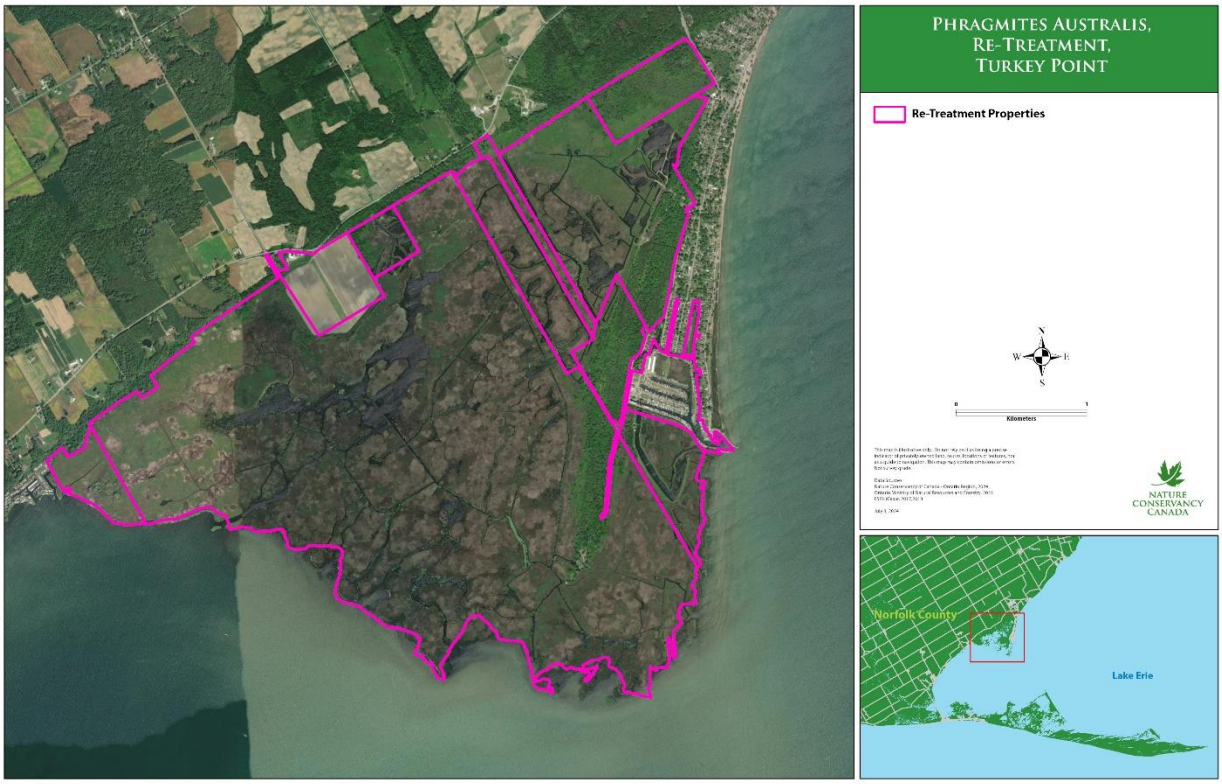


Figure 8. Potential re-treatment sites in the Turkey Point wetland complex, to occur between August 1 and October 31st, 2024. No new treatment planned for this area in 2024.

2.3. Stakeholder and User Group Summary

The Project Team's estimate of stakeholder groups and level of stakeholder use is summarized in the following paragraphs:

2.3.1 Residents of Long Point, Lower Big Creek, and Turkey Point

Due to the use of a registered herbicide following label conditions and the comfortability of the community with ongoing Phragmites management, a public information session will not be held in 2024.

To keep residents informed of the project, the Implementation Plan and live project updates will be posted on the Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance website www.longpointphragmites.ca.

2.3.2 Indigenous Communities

From 2019-2023, ECCC-CWS supported and led engagement with local Indigenous communities to provide project information and facilitate communications. As a result, engagement sessions with select Indigenous communities occurred in 2019, 2020 and 2021, and annual communications have occurred in 2022 and 2023 via formal and informal engagement letters and meetings. The Project Team does not intend to pursue any formal engagement in 2024 but will continue to work with communities on Phragmites management in the region.

2.3.3 Long Point Ratepayers' Association

The Long Point Ratepayers' Association was established in 1961 for the purpose of promoting the general interest and welfare of the Long Point Community. As an Association, they are also concerned with preserving Long Point's unique and fragile environment. A large number of the residents of Long Point are members of this Association, and the Project Team have partnered with the Long Point Ratepayers' Association on Phragmites management activities in the past with great success. This project is expected to have low to no impact on the Long Point Ratepayers' Association or any of its members. In addition, the association has led the establishment of a local concerned citizens group, the Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance. This group has advocated for the management of Phragmites and as result we expect that strong support from Long Point Ratepayers' Association and the Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance will be received.

2.3.4 Boaters

The Project Team will have information regarding the project posted at boat launches and marinas in the Long Point region. Due to proposed timing and location of the project, no impacts to recreational boaters are anticipated.

2.3.5 Waterfowl Hunters

Opening day for waterfowl hunting in 2024 is expected to occur on September 21 with a single day hunt on Waterfowler Heritage Day occurring on September 14th. Herbicide application within the Big Creek NWA will not occur on Waterfowler Heritage Day, and ECCC-CWS will alert hunters and close impacted blinds if work occurs on hunting days. No hunting is permitted on the Long Point NWA so hunters will not be impacted by the project. The Long Point Waterfowlers' Association and the Long Point Company are in full support of Phragmites management projects and have led several large management projects in terrestrial areas in recent years. The Long Point Waterfowlers' Association is a significant partner having contributed a large portion of funding for the project in the past and strong support from this organization is confirmed.

2.3.6 Municipality, Health Unit, OPP, Fire Department, Local Hospitals

In previous years of the project and while working under the ER, the Project Team sent annual notifications to Norfolk County, Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Norfolk General Hospital, and the local fire department(s) prior to commencing Phragmites management. This project was consistently a low level of concern from these service groups given the history of the project and existing working relationships. In 2024, given the use of a registered herbicide, these groups will not be notified prior to management.

2.3.7 Birds Canada

Birds Canada is the Project Team's partner in implementation of the project at the tip of Long Point. They have been involved in project planning and will be kept up to date about project plans as they progress. The Project Team will notify Birds Canada when commencing the 2024 Phragmites management project.

2.3.8 Ontario Parks Staff

The Project Team will inform the park superintendent Long Point Provincial Park (LPPP) of project plans and timelines and will remain in contact throughout treatment. The LPPP has been a longtime partner and supporter of the project and has implemented significant Phragmites management efforts on their lands.

2.3.9 Campers

Located adjacent to the treatment areas, the Long Point New Park campground remains open for camping through August to October each season. The campground will likely be fully booked. As outlined in Section 2.3.9, Ontario Parks Staff will be updated as the project occurs and can provide notice and information to campers as necessary. The project will have no impact on campers.

2.3.10 Day Users

It is anticipated that LPPP will see an average of 1000 daily vehicle passes sold for average weekends in August, with less than 50 sold mid-weekdays in the month of September. The park will see an average of 20 additional vehicles each day that will have a seasonal or annual vehicle pass. Ontario Parks Staff will be updated as the project occurs and can provide notice and information to day users as necessary.

2.4. Notification Arrangements

This section of the plan describes how and when the Project Team will provide notice of herbicide use as part of the 2024 Phragmites management project. These notification arrangements are based on an assessment of:

- The level of usage of the areas during the project timeline where herbicide may be used
- The extent to which activities generally undertaken in these areas could lead to some direct contact with herbicides

Notice of herbicide use will be provided by a combination of methods, the details of which are outlined below.

2.4.1. Signage

Signs will be posted at various locations (see Appendix I) around the project areas. Signs will be posted at least 48 hours prior to herbicide application and will remain for at least 48 hours after application. Signs will be of a standardized design that will be easily recognizable to the public (see Appendix II). Signs will be posted on or adjacent to barriers placed at all access points to the application area, as well as high traffic areas. Signs will also be posted at general information areas such as the Big Creek NWA Office.

2.4.2 Verbal Information Relay

Where trails or other access points into the treatment area must be closed to foot traffic, signage will be placed strategically in order to ensure any unauthorized access is prevented and information on the project can be relayed. The NWAs will be closed to the public during herbicide application, and information will be made available at the Big Creek NWA office.

2.4.3. Email

The Project Team may use email as a means of notification, if specific stakeholders' express interest in receiving digital notice or for greater ease in contacting specific staff within Norfolk County, Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, the Ontario Provincial Police and the local fire department(s). The contact emails for each key project location is outlined in Section 2.7.

2.4.4. Phone Contact

Where requests for additional information are received, or other means of contact are not possible, phone contact will be undertaken by the Project Team, to ensure all stakeholder groups identified above have been notified. The following phone number will be used for all contacts regarding the project:

Project Supervisor – Herbicide Application: Heather Braun at Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service, 647-232-8495.

2.4.5. Information on Websites

The Project Team will be posting regular updates related to proposed treatment dates within the identified treatment window, as well as copies of the project implementation plan, and monitoring plan on the website: Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance (longpointphragmites.ca).

2.5. What information will be provided

In accordance with the Pesticides Act, notices of herbicide use must include all of the following information:

- The full product name(s) of the herbicide(s) to be used
- The purpose of the use, clearly setting out what pest will be treated
- The range of dates within which the herbicide use will occur and, if possible, the proposed date of aerial and ground treatment
- A map depicting the area where the herbicide will be applied
- Contact information, including phone number and email address for a contact person whom people can contact to discuss the notice
- Any warnings regarding re-entry prior to use of the place of herbicide application specified on the product label

2.6. How the public and stakeholders will be informed of the notification plan

The Project Team will advise the public and stakeholders of the plan and its contents by:

- Making a copy of the plan available for public viewing free of charge at the Big Creek National Wildlife Area office.
- Placing a copy of the plan on the Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance website at: longpointphragmites.ca
- Including reference to the plan within communications materials being set out as part of this plan

2.7. Contact Details

National Wildlife Areas

Anyone wishing to contact Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service to discuss the notification plan or to obtain details of the Phragmites Management Project should contact:

Heather Braun, Habitat Biologist
Phone: 647-232-8495
Email: heather.braun@ec.gc.ca

Long Point Lower Big Creek Private Marshes

Anyone wishing to contact the Nature Conservancy of Canada to discuss the notification plan or to obtain details of the 2024 Phragmites Management Project should contact:

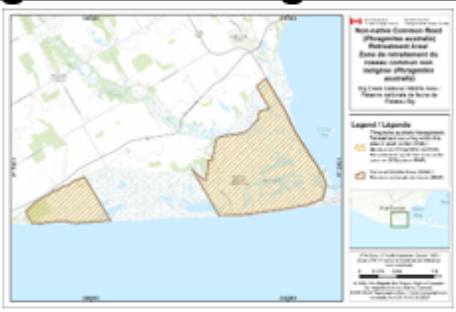
Brett Norman, Program Manager - Invasive Species Program
Phone: 226-231-0331
Email: brett.norman@natureconservancy.ca

3. APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – Map of Notification Sign Locations in Long Point Region

APPENDIX II – Ground Notification Signs

Phragmites Management 2024



Phragmites control project area, August to October 2024

NOTICE: An aquatic herbicide application for the management of *Phragmites australis* will take place between August and October at the Big Creek National Wildlife Area and adjacent private properties.

Residents within 1.0 kilometer of the project area should visit http://longpointphragmites.ca/ for regular updates on the herbicide application and recommended precautions.

Treatment Window: August 1, 2024 to October 31, 2024 (weather permitting)

For updates visit: http://longpointphragmites.ca/

Herbicide: Habitat® Aqua (active ingredient: imazapyr; Reg. no. 32374)

There is NO RESTRICTION on the use of water for recreation or domestic purposes (i.e. toilets, showers). Additionally, there is NO RESTRICTION on the use of water for drinking by livestock. As a precautionary measure, all residences using a surface water system for consumption (for example: taking water directly from the boating channel or inner Long Point Bay to drink, cook or for food preparation) should shut down their water system and avoid consumption of the water for a minimum of 48 hours following herbicide application. Systems should be flushed for at least 20 minutes before consuming again. Please note: these precautionary measures are only for those with private water systems drawing water from the channel or inner Long Point Bay. **If you get your water from the Port Rowan Municipal Water System, no action is required.**

For more information regarding the aquatic herbicide application, the permitting process, or other project specifics, contact:

Heather Braun, Project Manager
Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service
heather.braun@ec.gc.ca; 647-232-8495

Brett Norman, Invasive Species Program Manager
Nature Conservancy of Canada
brett.norman@natureconservancy.ca; 226-231-0331

Phragmites Management 2024

Phragmites Management Project Areas, August to October 2024

NOTICE: An aquatic herbicide application for the management of invasive *Phragmites australis* will take place between August and October 2024 at the Long Point National Wildlife Area and adjacent private and provincial properties.

Residents within 1.0 kilometer of the project areas should visit http://longpointphragmites.ca/ for updates and recommended precautions.

Treatment Window: August 1, 2024 to October 31, 2024 (weather permitting)

For updates visit: http://longpointphragmites.ca/

Herbicide: Habitat® Aqua (active ingredient: imazapyr; Reg. no. 32374)

There is NO RESTRICTION on the use of water for recreation, or domestic purposes (i.e. toilets, showers). Additionally, there is NO RESTRICTION on the use of water for drinking by livestock. As a precautionary measure, residences using a surface water system for human consumption (for example: taking water directly from the boating channel or inner Long Point Bay to drink, cook or for food preparation) should shut down their water system and avoid consumption of the water for a minimum of 48 hours following herbicide application. Systems should be flushed for at least 20 minutes before use. Please note: these precautionary measures are only for those with private water systems drawing water from the channel or inner Long Point Bay. **If you get water from the Port Rowan Municipal Water System, no action is required.**

For more information regarding the aquatic herbicide application, the permitting process, or other project specifics, contact:

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Brett Norman, Invasive Species Program Manager,
Nature Conservancy of Canada
brett.norman@natureconservancy.ca; 226-231-0331