

# The Manitoulin Phragmites Project Results of 2018 Work

compiled by Judith Jones, Project Coordinator, October 2018



The Manitoulin Phragmites Project team and volunteers brush-cutting dense Phragmites at Blue Jay Creek.

**Phragmites** (“frag-MITE-eeze”), is an hugely tall, aggressive, European grass that is spreading on shores and in wetlands on Manitoulin Island and other islands. It quickly grows into dense patches and eventually smothers everything else. In southern Ontario, Phragmites has taken over hectares and hectares of shoreline and wetland habitat. People can't get to the lake from their camps, a kids camp had to build a pool because they couldn't use their beach, and fish can't spawn in the shallow water any more. Phragmites is a serious threat to property values, recreation, tourism, biodiversity, and aesthetics.

**We don't want Phragmites to take over Manitoulin Island!** Manitoulin Phragmites Project has just finished its third year of on-the-ground work to get this highly invasive species under control in this region. The project is currently funded until March, 2020.

**You are receiving this letter because there is Phragmites on your property or in your jurisdiction.** We want you to know where the Phragmites is, what we've done so far (see page 4), and what actions you may want to consider in your future planning.

**The Manitoulin Phragmites Project in 2018:** Our 4-person field team did control work at 53 sites across the Manitoulin Region from the western side of Cockburn Island to the Georgian Bay side of Manitoulin Island, including the Duck Islands. We brought in two Truxor cutting machines and removed more than 20 dump truck loads of Phragmites from the mouth of Blue Jay Creek and approximately 9 dump truck loads from the head of South Bay on Wiikwemkoong Territory. We now have more than 57 beach, shore, wetland, and roadside sites where Phragmites is under control or eradicated and 12 sites worked in 2016 and 2017 that needed no actions in 2018. Phragmites is now under control across the south shore of Manitoulin Island from South Baymouth to the Mississagi Lighthouse, with the exception of the mouth of Blue Jay Creek, Carroll Wood Bay, and Burnt Island Bay. We worked with MTO on controlling Phragmites in 2018 highway construction zones on Manitoulin and will continue to work with MTO on highway roadside control to be done in 2019. During Manitoulin Phragmites Week the last week of July, we hosted 11 work bees and presentations and

made 3 requested house calls. We received 10 additional call-ins from the general public about Phrag locations that were not known to us. A total of 47 volunteers came out to help, and more than 65 people attended presentations.

**There are still some very large Phragmites problems in our area.** In 2018 we began documenting these and contacting partners to start thinking about long-term strategies needed for control. The Phrag at many of these sites may never be reduced, so management to prevent further spread may be the only solution and may be vital to protect surrounding ecosystems and properties. **Still, by the fall of 2019 we hope to have almost all of the sites that can be managed without large machinery under control.**

**The goal of the Manitoulin Phragmites Project** is to knock Phragmites back to a low enough level that we can keep it in check with a modest amount of annual maintenance. Note that "we" means all of us—municipalities, First Nations, community groups, private landowners, and visitors. **Phragmites is not going to go away**, so we need to view control as a seasonal task—just like raking leaves or mowing roadside ditches—that we'll need to do to keep our beaches, shores, and wetlands healthy and useable.

### **Here are some suggestions!**

--Hire summer students and put control of Phragmites in their job description. We'll be happy to come to your area and show them what to do. They may even enjoy working in the water to control Phrag during the hot days of July.

--Ask us to train your public works staff about Phragmites control of roadsides and other work areas, including about how to clean machinery.

--Take note of any Phragmites present in your area and report it to us (if you haven't already). We'll help you figure out what to do and work with you to get it under control.

--Read our simple info pamphlet available on our Facebook page (@manitoulinphrag) to find out about methods of control.

--Clean ATVs before leaving home, and clean machinery used for road or ditch work prior to going to a jobsite. This just means spraying down the wheels or tracks, wheel wells, bucket, etc. with a pressure washer or garden hose in the yard before heading out. It may take an extra 10 to 15 minutes, but it could save thousands of dollars in Phrag cleanup in the long run. Phragmites is mainly spread by fragments stuck to machinery and ATVs, so this step is critical to preventing further spread.

--Join us July 20-26, 2019 for **Manitoulin Phragmites Week**. Ask us to host a work bee in your area or to make a house call to your property.

--Contact us!

The Manitoulin Phragmites Project

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Manitoulin Phragmites Project and Manitoulin Streams staff working with volunteers on Phragmites at White's Point in 2018 (photo S. Deschenes)

**The Manitoulin Phragmites Project is sponsored by:**

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Ontario Parks

Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy

Northern Ontario Permaculture Research Institute

Friends of Misery Bay

And a host of local volunteers

**THANK YOU!**



Success! A beautiful new sand beach has washed in at Michael's Bay between the Manitou River and the mouth of Blue Jay Creek, in the area where our team did control work in 2015, 2016 and 2017.