



# Oliphant Fishing Islands Phragmites Community Group

OPWG January 18, 2018



# Oliphant Fishing Islands Phragmites Community Group (OFIPCG)

We are a not-for profit Community Group formed during the winter of 2017.

**Members 2017:** Cottagers from 7 of the Fishing Islands off the west shoreline of the Bruce Peninsula at Oliphant

**Members 2018:** Expanding to include cottagers from more Fishing Islands south of the original group. These islands are near the dredged channel (the Gut) which likely is the epicentre of the Oliphant Phragmites and a corridor of continued spread.

2018 sites to be tackled:

1. Smokehouse Island
2. Vimy Island
3. Rabbit



# Education and training of members

During the winter of 2017, I (Leslie) sent four **newsletters** to the members providing:

1. information about the biology of invasive *Phragmites australis* and the environmental destruction it is causing in the Great Lakes
2. References to best management practises for this invader
3. Suggestions for webinars provided by the Invasive Plant Council for the members to watch.

In early June we met **in person** to discuss our plans for hand/Stihl saw cutting the *Phragmites* around our islands and to see the various tools we would be using.





# Education for residents of the Bruce Peninsula shoreline near Oliphant-August 17, 2017 (education/collaboration)

In August I offered to provide a short PowerPoint presentation and hands-on demonstration to members of the South Bruce Peninsula Phragmites Group to show them what we had been doing out on the islands. Members of this group are preparing to help Bruce Peninsula Biosphere staff cut/gather Phragmites when they return next year.



# Survey, mapping and prioritizing of Phragmites

In late May 2017 I (Leslie) walked the shorelines of the 7 identified islands with **Rebecca Ferguson**, the stewardship technician from Grey Sauble Conservation.

I showed her the Phragmites which was just emerging and explained my priority sites and plans for cutting dates.



Grey Sauble Conservation Authority had purchased 2 Stihl Cutting saws they would loan us for 3 days on our first weekend of cutting mid July.

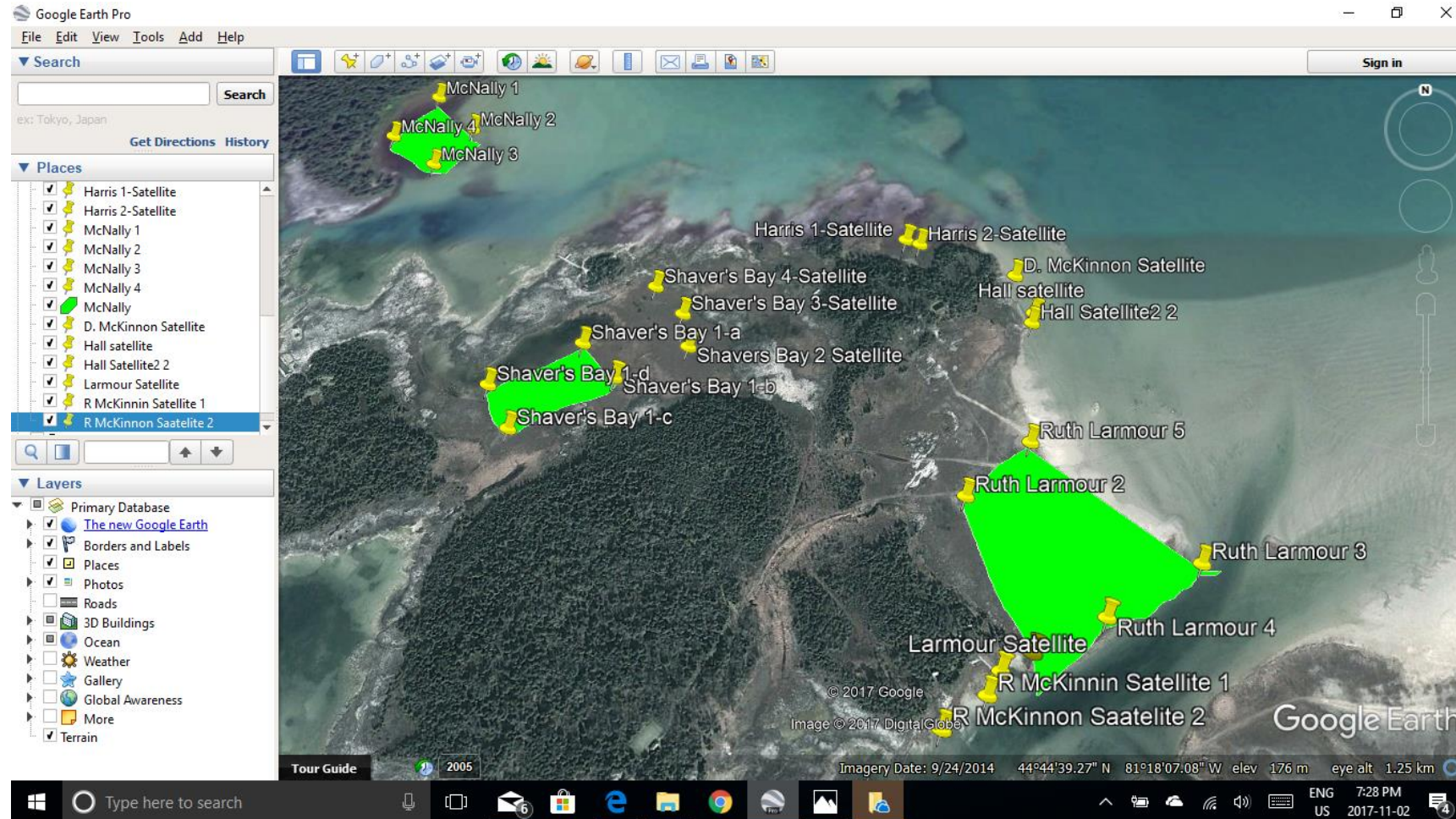
We scheduled our first cutting for 3 days **July 14, 15 and 15<sup>th</sup>**

There were no species nesting or spawning and no plant species of concern in the areas identified by that time.

We concentrated on the two largest sites.



2017 Phragmites cutting sites – please note very large site lower right (of Ruth Larmour's property)



# First weekend of cutting –July 14,15 and 16<sup>th</sup> (collaboration)

In the morning of the first day Rebecca showed us how to use the Stihl saws and what safety equipment to use. Rebecca and their summer student stayed for the whole day. Then we were off cutting and hauling (we call it schlepping) boatloads of cut biomass to shore! Thanks Grey Sauble!

**26 people put in 392 hours** tackling the two largest sites this first weekend.

We were joined for one day by **Sean Liipere** from the **Bruce Peninsula Biosphere** + 6 of his great helpers! Thanks Biosphere!





We perfected our techniques that weekend! Since then we have all bought hand cutters (raspberry cutters from Lee Valley) and 3 members have bought Stihl saws.



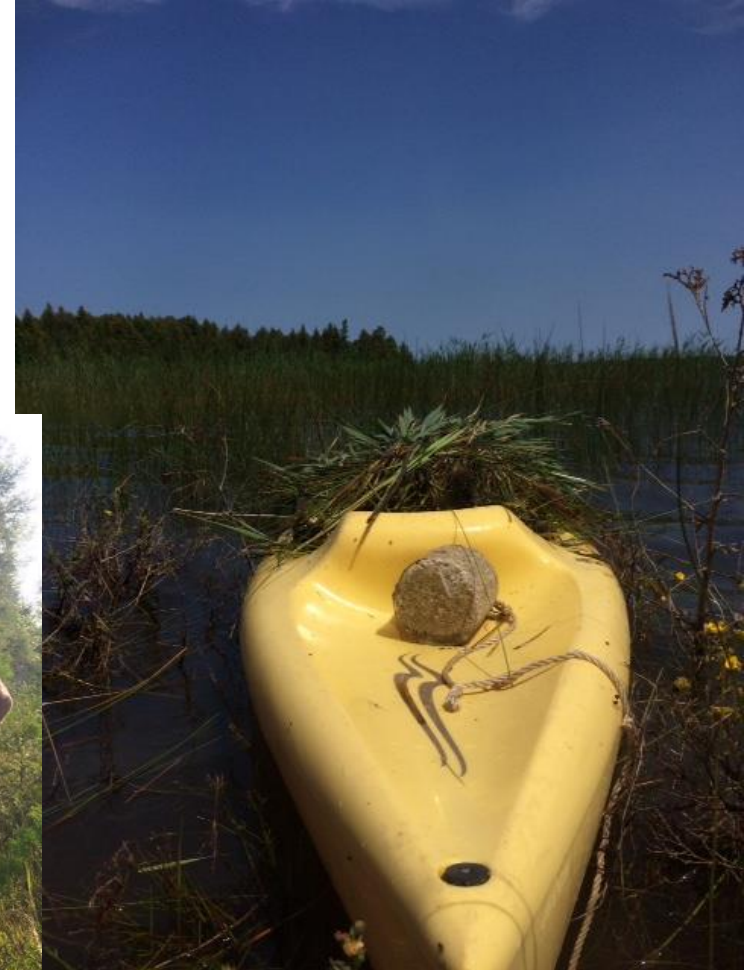


The Wiarton Schooners Hockey Team joined us one day. A big help!. Thanks Schooners!





46 volunteers put in just under 600 hours over the summer ( a few hours in the winter too!) working on all the identified sites. We worked on our own and in groups on the largest stands.





## Successes:

1. All members, their families and friends participated in cutting and schlepping Phragmites this summer.
2. Most stands were completely cut once by the end of the cutting season which ran into late September.
3. In many cases regrowth was also cut this year.
4. Next year will tell if the regrowth is diminished.
5. A real sense of pride and comradery developed over the year amongst all members.
6. We collaborated with other environmental and youth groups.
7. We have reached out to neighbouring cottagers to help them follow in our footsteps.



# Challenges:

## 1. Disposal of biomass:

We deposit the biomass on rocky shelves on the islands. Some burning has been done but not enough.

We have plans to try to refit a pontoon boat to transport to mainland and then to dump.



2. Massive, well established, dense stands of Phrag. Deep mat of dead stalks at the base. Just can't be cut with Stihl saws. Requires more robust equipment **OR** aerial herbicide.

**We put in 300 + hours to Larmour stand and only cut 1/3 of it!!!**

See video of just such a stand:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=qcZ4d5uHato>





## Challenges:

3. The job is very labour intensive. Many of us are retired etc. so we will be looking for/paying younger folk to join us next year.

4. This year I set the dates for many of the cutting days. In 2018 I will ask the cottagers to let me know what dates are good for them and we will rally around to help with the cutting.

OPWG:

Please help us to continue to lobby for appropriately trained pesticide exterminators to have more options for appropriate herbicide use.

We need to be able to wick, inject stems and aerial spray some Phragmites that is growing in the water.



# Thank you.

Sorry I could not be with you all!! Leslie

