

SQUASH LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT

Squash Lake (Oneida County) AIS Control 2026 Annual Summary DNR Grant ACEI-339-24

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Introduction

The Squash Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District requested, and was awarded the multi-year grant ACEI-339-24 for AIS control from 2024 through 2026. The grant was modified, with agreement from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, to include DASH harvesting along with the traditional diver hand-harvesting (removal). The modification was a result of increased presence of Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM).

This Summary is submitted to the Wisconsin DNR, and is to be used by Onterra LLC for preparing the Onterra's final grant report to be issued in the winter of 2027. This is the final Annual Summary Report by the Squash Lake P&R District for Grant ACEI-0339-24.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the diver hand harvesting data collected over the 2026 season as well as comparison of EWM population densities as measured by Onterra LLC in their spring and fall surveys.

- Based on subjective comparisons between the spring and fall surveys, there appears to be a significant decrease in the EWM population density in all priority areas. Squash Lake P&R District met the requirements for AIS Control
- Squash Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District 2026 Diver Hand Harvesting of Eurasian Water Milfoil broke the record for the pounds collected from the lake: 24,609 lbs.
- Measured against the Squash Lake Management Plan (2022), the 2026 EWM Control Season appears to be a success.
- CBCW work continued under the auspices of the Squash Lake Association.

Results by Grant Activity/Deliverable

1.a. Annual Hand-Harvesting Coordination and EWM Population Monitoring

Diving/harvesting priority areas have been set by Onterra, typically by late June or early July. Because diving usually starts before the ESAIS data is available, the divers use the prior year's annual priority areas and data from the prior year's Late Season Peak Bio Mass Survey (PBM) to direct their activities until the ESAIS data is available. This practice does tend to skew the ESAIS survey results, but overall, it has been a successful strategy. In 2026, Onterra performed the ESAIS survey on June 4th, with the map of 2026 priority areas becoming available on June 22nd. The divers began work on May 28th. There were 13 priority sites designated by Onterra (A-26 thru N-26) .

Harvesting by contracted divers was not limited to the priority areas. With time permitting, the divers went to areas of high EWM concentration identified by Onterra LLC, but not designated as a priority area. The divers did cover most if not all of the littoral zone of Squash Lake during the 2026 season. Diver also responded to observations of emerging EWM by the public, as well as the divers' own observations of areas with EWM about to reach the surface. However, the majority of harvesting occurred in the priority areas.

There were too many waypoints generated by Onterra LLC to be useful in harvesting. The focus was strictly on priority areas not individual plants or colonies due to the higher levels of EWM vs prior years.

Since herbicides are not used on Squash Lake to control EWM, the EWM collected by divers on Squash Lake was transported to a nearby organic farm. It is then combined with other organic material for composting for farm use.

Due to issues in the past with DASH services, DASH was not used in the 2026 season.

Onterra LLC performed a Point Intercept Survey in September 2026, to complete the work required under ACEI-339-24. However, the data analysis and maps from the survey are not available at the time that this report was issued. They will be available in Onterra's final report in 2027.

Note: The Lake Management Plan (2022) was completed in early 2022 satisfying the requirement for an aquatic plant management plan update for EWM Control .

This Annual Summary will be provided to Onterra LLC. The summary contains the data Onterra will need to complete their final grant report, which is to be issued in the winter of 2027. Onterra will make the final assessment of whether EWM increased, was maintained, or decreased in each priority area. This report is a qualitative assessment only.

Figure 1.a.1: 2025 Early Season AIS Survey Map

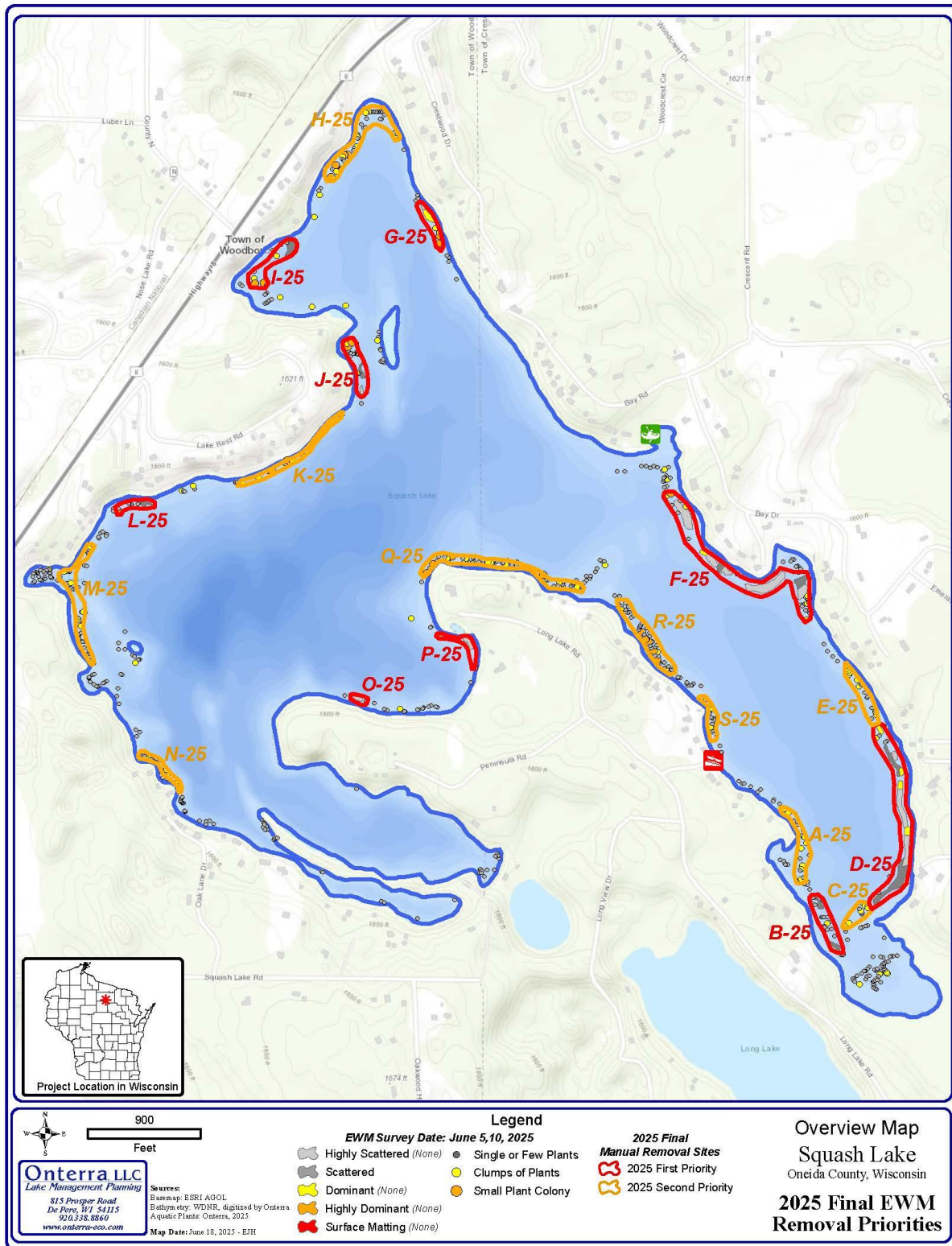


Figure 1.a.2: 2026 Early Season AIS Survey Map

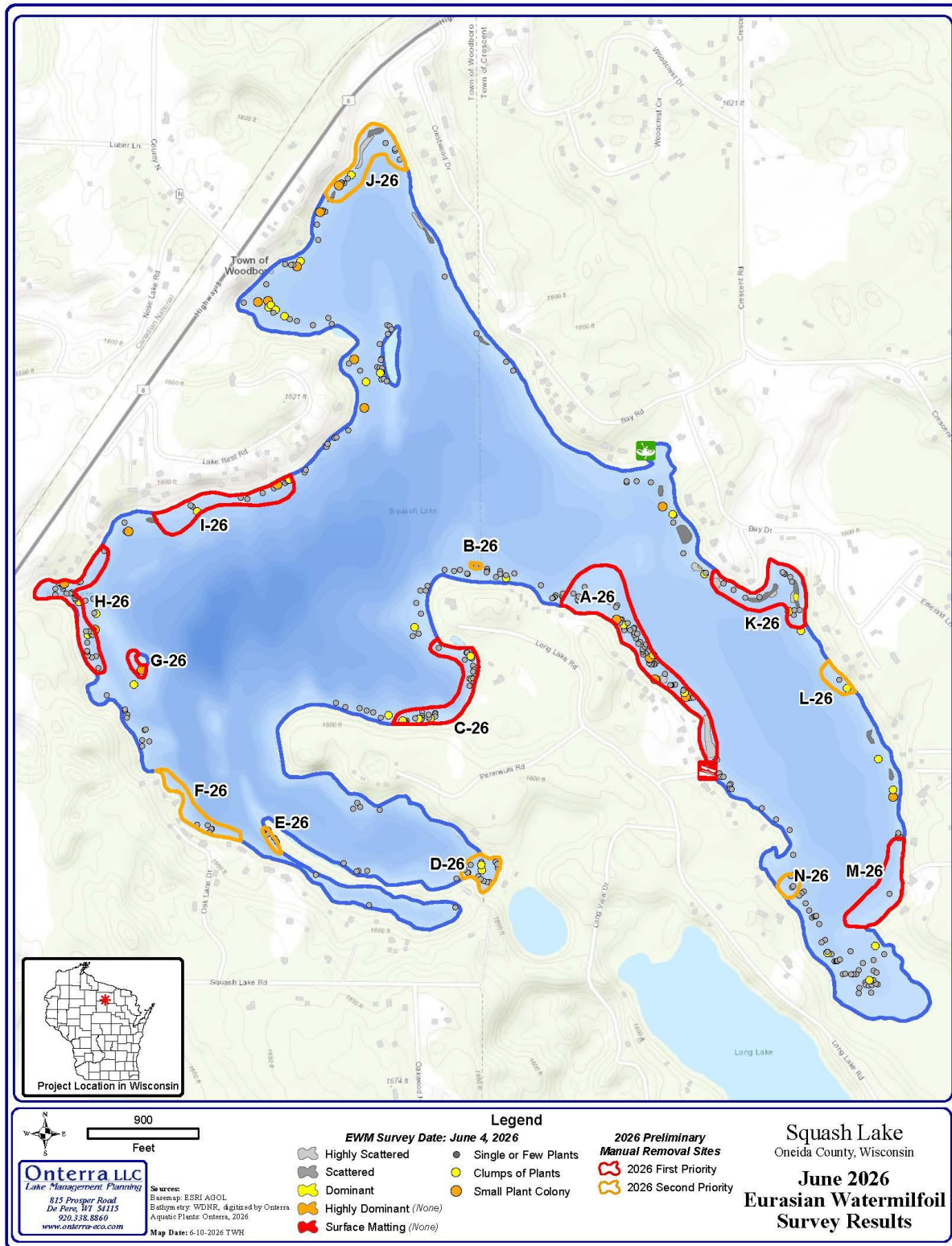
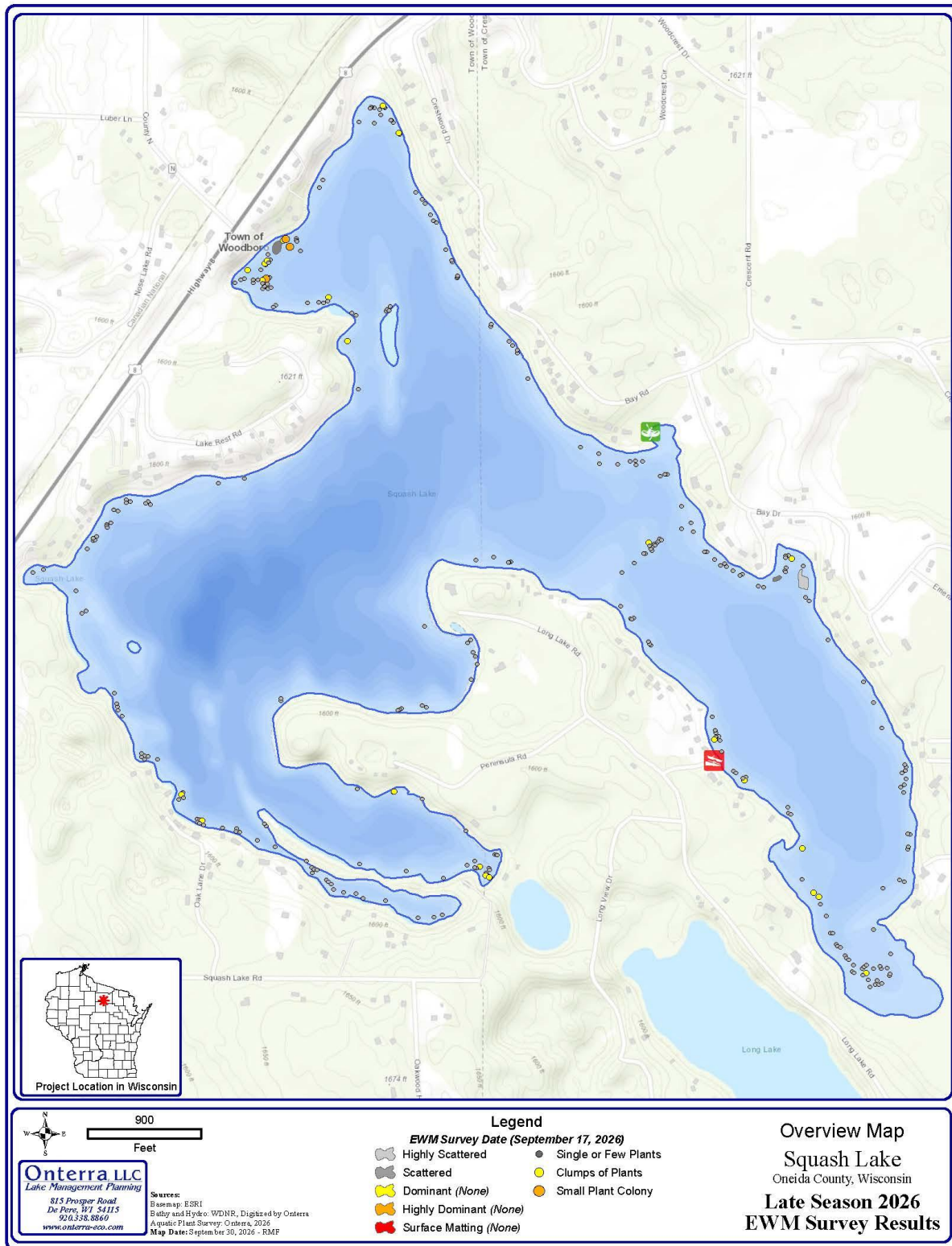


Figure 1.a.3: 2026 Fall Peak Biomass Survey Map



1.b. Conduct EWM Diver Hand Harvesting

The District contracted with 15 divers in 2025. The following tables provide a summary of the Diver Hand Harvesting activities. While the focus was on identified priority areas, the independent divers also harvested outside these areas and collected EWM in areas that historically were areas of concern in prior years. Of the 24,609 lbs of EWM collected, 76% (or 18,673 lbs) was from the 2026 Priority Areas.

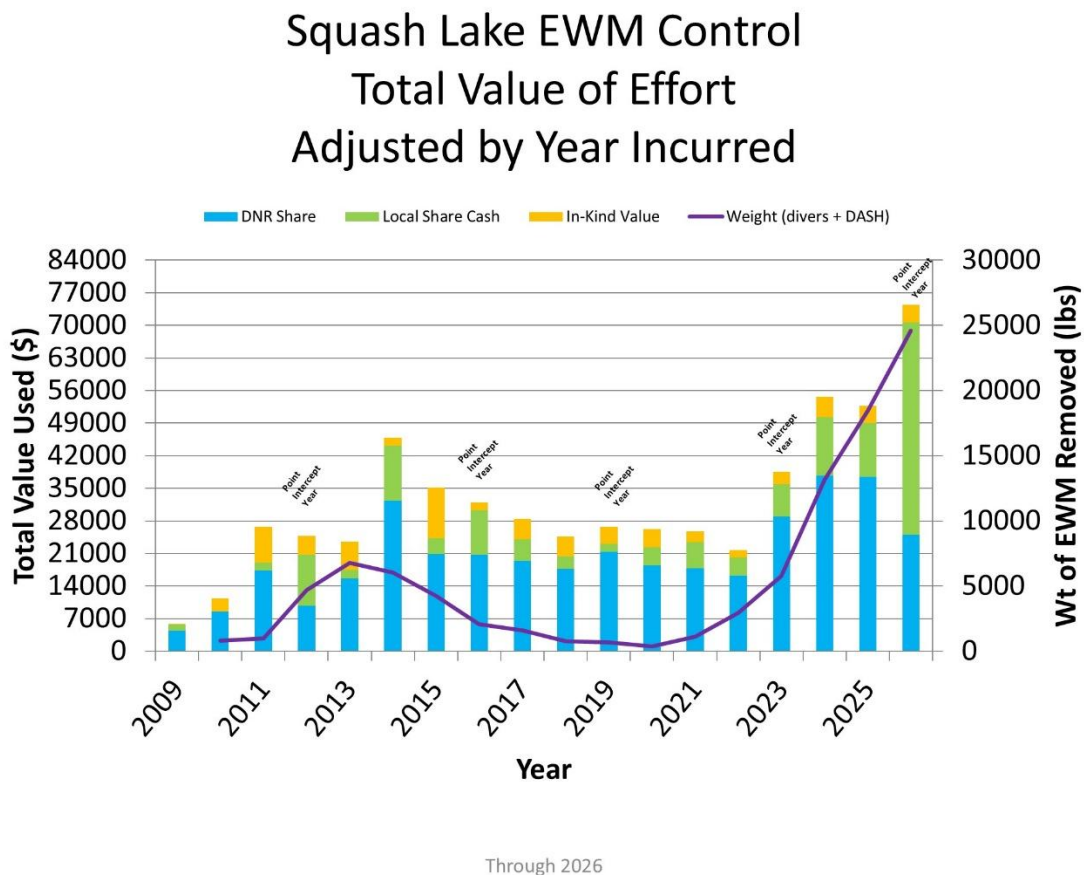
Table 1.b.1: 2026 Diver Hand Harvesting Data (Contracted Divers)

	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022
Dive Season	May 28 to Sept. 17	June 11 to Oct. 02	June 04 to Sept. 19	June 05 to Sept. 08	June 09 to Sept. 08
Diving Days	63 days	42 days	35 days	27 days	29 days
Diving Hours	1364.75 hrs	831.5 hrs	675.5 hrs	341.5 hrs	374.5 hrs
Pounds EWM Collected	24,609 lbs	18,512 lbs	12,083 lbs	4262 lbs	2960 lbs

Table 1.b.2: 2026 EWM Collected per Onterra LLC Priority Location

2026 Priority Locations	Priority	Pounds EWM Collected YTD	# Of Visits by Divers
A-26	1	3924	8
B-26	2	1241	3
C-26	1	1017	3
D-26	2	200	1
E-26	2	124	1
F-26	2	480	2
G-26	1	221	2
H-26	1	1165	4
I-26	1	872	4
J-26	2	2012	6
K-26	1	4201	12
L-26	2	407	1
M-26	1	2274	8
N-26	2	535	1
Non-priority Areas		5936	15
Total for Priority Areas		18,673 lbs of 24,609 lbs total	56 visits of 71 visits total

Figure 1.b.2: Historical EWM Harvest (lbs) vs Value of Removal Effort



1.c. Assess EWM Strategy

Overall improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of diver hand harvesting were maintained. However the presence of EWM on Squash Lake increased in 2026 as it had on many lakes in the region. The current strategy was able to keep pace with the increase.

1.d. Native and Invasive Plant Monitoring (Point Intercept)

The PI will be discussed in Onterra's final report.

1.e. Overall Project Evaluation

Overall project evaluation for this grant is postponed until the final report to be issued by Onterra in 2027.

1.f. Boat Inspections (CBCW)

Boat inspections continued in 2026. The Clean Boats Clean Waters program is maintained by grant with the Squash Lake Association.