

The Facts about Floating Cat-tail Mats (or Bogs) on Crowe Lake

Crowe Lake Waterway Association (CLWA) is monitoring the floating cat-tail mats or “bogs” which have been seen drifting down the lake over the last few weeks. As affected lake residents, we share your concerns about where these come from, how they affect the lake, and what or should be done about it.

Here are the facts:

- **CLWA in Action.** In 2018, we struck a committee to research these mats so that we could better understand their cause and provide guidance on how to address them. We enlisted the help of Crowe Valley Conservation Authority (CVCA), the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), and the Federation of Ontario Cottager Associations (FOCA). Turns out, we are not alone. We gained insight and input from a multitude of lakes and waterway associations throughout our region and Ontario. The problem is not unique to Crowe Lake. It is a common phenomenon across southern Ontario.
- **A Natural Occurrence.** The floating mats are a natural occurrence created by high water levels and/or storms that tear whole sections free from the shore. Thick ice in the wetlands, as it breaks up, also rips sections of island mats loose. These island mats migrate around the lake with changing winds and/or water currents. They either reattach to a new shore area or break up in heavy weather and float down river.
- **Record High Water Levels.** With the record, high water levels during 2018 and 2019, a multitude of very large island mats detached during these periods and migrated with the winds and currents. The Trent canal system which includes Campbellford is undergoing extensive repairs which may also have impacted the water flow from Crowe Lake.
- **What can you do?** MNR has advised and CVCA concurs that the island mats can be returned to their original sites, can be cut up and removed from the lake, can be relocated in approved wetland sites or can be pushed back off shore. This is why cut marks can be seen on some island mats as property owners try to reduce the size and move the masses out from their properties. Other owners tried to move these masses back to where they came from. For example, Bayview Trailer Park tried to use boats to push to the floating mats back to their wetland origins, but this met with limited success.
- **What is CLWA doing?** Two members of CLWA board spent considerable time touring the wetlands located in the southwest area of Crowe Lake on the weekend. They found significant high water and ice stress along the various channels. We noticed, on trip around the lake, that cantilevered docks and their guy wires, permanent in water docks and rocky shorelines sometimes caused the mats to “hang up” and anchor to that site. MNR advises that so long as the island mats are brown, they can be moved but once they green up or attach to land, they must remain in place.
- **What does the TSW Recommend?** The Trent Severn Waterway (TSW) has advised that the floating mats should be moved and anchored to suitable designated areas out of the navigational channel and away from private property. Due to their size, they recommended they be broken up into smaller chunks.
- **Is this New?** These problems are not new and with ongoing high-water levels in the spring, will occur year after year. With climate change, the agencies have indicated these conditions should be view as the new normal. Unfortunately, these floating island mats are considered a natural occurrence, and nobody is claiming any jurisdictional oversight or responsibility to commit any resources to it or provide any resolutions.
- **Bottom Line.** These are annoying; they are not new; they are natural; you can push floating matts back out to open water; if they anchor on your beach or lakefront you will have to remove them appropriately in consultation with the authorities. We hope this is helpful. Crowe Lake Waterway Association will continue to monitor this situation and keep our members advised of any updates.