

YET ANOTHER INVASIVE?

Submitted by: Bob Becker

The Tri City Record ran a report and picture of another invasive threat to Paw Paw Lake last week; that being the Amur or Grass Carp a fish not native to America. Sometime ago they were imported from China to control weeds in ponds and lakes and were supposed to have an extra chromosome to render them infertile.

Eventually some fish escaped from their ponds and spread to other lakes becoming such a nuisance that many states have now outlawed implantations. Even though they were thought to be triploid or infertile some of these fish can and do reproduce which wreaks havoc with the environmental balance of any lake. Because of our weed problem someone might have taken it upon themselves to plant a few here, an illegal act.

Just as the Paw Paw Lake Association (PPLA) cautions against individual weed treatment in order that we, the state and local authorities know what is being placed in the lake; those same conditions exist when it comes to individuals planting any nonnative plants or animals in the lake. Well intentioned but uninformed individuals often end up doing more harm than good.

There may be better methods when it comes to removal of weeds or even the geese that were “rounded up” a few weeks ago. While we work on the weeds, residents can do something to help us reduce lake nutrients and help control our geese humanely. The PPLA highly recommends native buffer plantings along your shore as native long rooted plants do five things well:

1. Native plants hold soils and reduce or even eliminate erosion ceasing the need for sea walls.
2. Native plants help slow run off and help cleanse contaminants from the water entering the lake.
3. They beautify your shoreline, enhancing your home’s value.
4. They prevent geese from using your lawn as a bathroom and
5. May eliminate the need for future goose roundups!

Carp on the other hand, whether “established” (no carp is native) or Grass, have zero redeeming value in our echo system. Both species of carp feed on the bottom, eat Frey and immature native fish while stirring up bottom sediments, releasing nutrients and increasing the turbidity into the water column. Grass carp also feed on native plants and shun Eurasian Water Milfoil and Curly leaf pond weed, the two invasive weeds we are trying to control. The less native weeds thrive, the more the invasives take root. Carp’s habit of rooting in the lake bottom and the resultant turbidity also makes it difficult for game fish to spawn.

The Amur caught in Paw Paw Lake was 70 lbs. and the fisherman who caught it said he’s seen larger and some have been known to weight up to 90 lbs. While favoring ‘catch and release’ for native species; Grass Carp of this or any size, especially after a 45 minute cross lake battle; makes it seem like “kill or be killed”! Any carp caught should not be released; it should be eaten or discarded in an environmentally sound manner.