

## 2026 Three Lakes Association Aquatic Science High School Summer Internship *Aquatic Plant Survey in Lake Bellaire*

Each summer Three Lakes Association (TLA) studies some aspect of our watershed with ambitious high school students. There are three goals for the high school internship. The first is to build connection between youth and the water bodies that define the landscape they live in. The second is to give students experience with aquatic science, both so they understand how water bodies are protected, and to help them learn about their own interests in aquatic science. The final goal is to monitor and improve water quality in and around Clam Lake, Lake Bellaire and Torch Lake.

This year, TLA interns will complete an aquatic plant survey of Lake Bellaire. We will document the native species and see if any invasive species have arrived since the last aquatic plant survey in 2013. We will use a double-rake system to haul plants on board and an underwater camera with a live video feed to see and document plant communities.

Whether you dislike aquatic plants, or don't think about them much at all, they deserve a closer look because they are so valuable to underwater ecosystems. Imagine the land without any plants – no trees, no grass, no shrubs, no wildflowers – and you start to understand how vital aquatic plants are for lakes.

Some of the things aquatic plants provide:

1. hiding places and food for small fish and invertebrates
2. food for birds and mammals
3. oxygen (aquatic life requires oxygen)
4. shoreline erosion protection from wave action
5. competition against algae and invasive plants
6. nutrient capture from shoreline inputs
7. beauty



Aquatic plant surveys are usually conducted every 5-10 years. The last time TLA surveyed Lake Bellaire for aquatic plants was 2013, so it's time for a new survey. Twenty-seven different types of plants were found then, and none of them were considered invasive. Since then however, Eurasian water milfoil and curly leaf pondweed (both invasive species) have been found in nearby lakes and rivers, making Lake Bellaire particularly likely to be invaded. This survey is important because it will help us find established invasive species so they can be eradicated, and it will teach us about the native community of aquatic plants in Lake Bellaire and inform future management decisions.

Because many aquatic plants die off each fall and must regrow each summer, it is best to do plant surveys in July and August, when plants have regrown. For this reason, our first field day will be June 25. We will then be on the water every Thursday morning through August 6, collecting and identifying aquatic plants.

The next two weeks in August we will compile data, look for patterns, and prepare a presentation. One presentation will be given to the TLA board and the slideshow will be part of the TLA archives. Participants will also present to their school boards in the fall. *We hope you will join us!*



Eurasian watermilfoil  
and curly leaf pondweed

© 2011 Steve D. Eggen

# 2026 Three Lakes Association Aquatic Science High School Summer Internship

## *Aquatic Plant Survey of Lake Bellaire*

### How to apply

- Apply online at [3lakes.com/summer-internship-program](https://3lakes.com/summer-internship-program)
- Only online applications are accepted
- Deadline is Monday, May 18 at 5PM
- Successful Applicants will be notified by May 21



Application is here

**Open to ambitious Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors**

### Summer Schedule

**June 4 at 4:00 PM** Interns are required to attend a 1-hour orientation (location TBD)

- Bring with you a signed Student Agreement (given when accepted to the program)
- Meet the other interns and internship team and get oriented to the project

**Thursday mornings, June 25 – August 5, 8AM-12:30** (Jun 25, Jul 3, 11, 16, 25, 30, Aug 6)

- First week involves a shakedown and training on equipment and procedures.
- The next six weeks we are on boats on Lake Bellaire. Weather may require us to reschedule.
- Meeting location will change weekly, depending on where we are sampling.
- Reliable transportation is required.
- We will occasionally meet beyond 12:30 with advance notice.

**Two mornings per week, August 11-20, 8AM-Noon** (Aug, 10, 13, 17, 20)

- We have two weeks to compile our data & create a presentation for the TLA Board of Directors.
- Mondays and Thursdays: August 11 and 14, and August 17 and 20.

**August 25 at 9:00 AM** Presentation to the TLA Board of Directors in Bellaire

### About the Program Lead

Jeanie Williams is the former Executive Director of Three Lakes Association. She has a master's degree in environmental science, a bachelor's degree in biology, and has been certified as a secondary science teacher. She has worked with teens in numerous field research programs in Vermont, Minnesota, and Michigan. This is her sixth summer working with TLA summer interns. She will be assisted by TLA volunteers, including Gary Bart and several competent boat captains.



### To contact us

TLA Executive Director, Lois MacLean at [3lakes.info@gmail.com](mailto:3lakes.info@gmail.com) or 231-412-7551

Intern Program Lead, Jeanie Williams at [jwilliams.threelakes@gmail.com](mailto:jwilliams.threelakes@gmail.com) or 231-492-0424



*The mission of the Three Lakes Association is to provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed for all generations with emphasis on Lake Bellaire, Clam Lake, Torch Lake and their tributaries.*