



11333 N. Cedarburg Road  
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Public Works Department

**MILWAUKEE RIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 5, 2026 - 5:30 PM**  
**North Conference Room**

**Agenda**

- 1) Call to Order and Roll Call**
- 2) Approval of Meeting Minutes**
- 3) Discussion and Possible Action Items**
  - a) Potential regulation power loading of boats at the Villa Grove boat ramp
  - b) Potential educational opportunities regarding dead ash trees along river and shoreline debris
  - c) High-water markings at the Villa Grove ramp and the Highland Road bridge
  - d) Purple Loosestrife along the Milwaukee River and tributaries
- 4) Adjourn**

DATED: March 5, 2026

/s/ Michael Gross, Chair

Notice is hereby given that a quorum of other governmental bodies may be present at this meeting to present, discuss and/or gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility, although they will not take formal action thereto at this meeting. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodation for attendance at this meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at 262-236-2914, twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the meeting.

Any questions regarding this agenda may be directed to the City Clerk's Office at 262-236-2914, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM.



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**Buildings and Grounds**

**TO: Milwaukee River Advisory Committee**  
**FROM: Nate Herlache, City Forester**  
**DATE: March 5, 2026**  
**SUBJECT: Discussion of the potential regulation of power loading boats.**

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### **Background**

Regulation of power loading at the Villa Grove Boat Ramp is being discussed as a way to protect public infrastructure, improve safety, and reduce long-term maintenance costs. Power loading refers to the practice of using a boat's motor to drive the vessel onto or off a trailer rather than floating it into position and securing it with a winch. While convenient for some boaters, the propeller thrust associated with this practice can displace sediment at the base of the ramp, creating holes and mounds that may undermine the ramp structure over time. These conditions can lead to costly repairs, reduced usability, and, in severe cases, temporary closure of the launch.

In addition to infrastructure impacts, power loading can create safety and environmental concerns. Uneven sediment conditions may cause trailers or vehicles to become stuck and can pose hazards to boaters navigating near the launch. Disturbed sediment can also increase turbidity and affect near-shore habitat conditions. Many communities and boating agencies encourage or require boaters to float vessels onto trailers and use winches instead of engine thrust to minimize these impacts. When evaluating a potential regulation, decision-makers typically consider ramp condition, maintenance history, safety concerns, enforcement feasibility, and the balance between user convenience and long-term preservation of the facility.

### **Analysis**

A potential restriction on power loading at the Villa Grove Boat Ramp presents both operational and policy considerations for the municipality. From an infrastructure perspective, limiting or prohibiting the use of engine thrust during loading may help reduce sediment displacement at the toe of the ramp, thereby preserving structural integrity and potentially lowering long-term maintenance and dredging costs. Preventative measures such as a ban can be more cost-effective than repeated repairs, particularly if the ramp shows signs of scour or uneven riverbank conditions. Additionally, reducing sediment disturbance may improve safety by decreasing the likelihood of vehicles or trailers becoming stuck and minimizing navigation hazards near the

launch area.

However, implementation considerations should be evaluated, including public compliance, enforcement practicality, and user impacts. Some boaters, particularly those with larger or heavier vessels, may perceive a ban as reducing efficiency or convenience at the launch, which could affect ramp throughout peak periods. Clear signage, public education, and consistency with regional boating practices would be important to support compliance. Decision-makers may also wish to weigh whether alternative approaches — such as targeted education, partial restrictions, or monitoring ramp conditions — could achieve similar outcomes. Overall, the analysis centers on balancing user convenience with infrastructure preservation, safety, and responsible stewardship of public facilities.

**Fiscal Impact**

N/A

**Recommendation**

N/A

Attachments:

None



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**Buildings and Grounds**

**TO:** Milwaukee River Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** Nate Herlache, City Forester  
**DATE:** March 5, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** Potential educational opportunities regarding dead ash trees along river and shoreline debris

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### **Background**

Dead and declining ash trees along the river corridor continue to contribute to falling limbs and accumulated debris piles, creating potential safety, navigation, and aesthetic concerns for adjacent property owners and the broader community. Riverfront residents are encouraged to proactively manage and properly dispose of woody debris located on their property or within their maintenance responsibility areas, consistent with local guidance and environmental best practices. The River Advisory Committee is continuing discussions on the most effective methods to notify and educate neighboring property owners about debris management expectations, available resources, and ongoing impacts related to ash tree loss, with the goal of supporting coordinated stewardship of the river corridor.

### **Analysis**

Ongoing discussions by the River Advisory Committee regarding notification and outreach methods are an important step toward improving coordination and awareness among riverfront property owners. Establishing clear expectations, identifying available resources, and determining effective communication channels may help improve compliance and foster shared stewardship.

Staff notes that historically the WDNR has declared tree debris in a waterway as fish habitat, restricting enforcement of removing the potential impediment from the waterway.

The City has an established nuisance tree ordinance that requires enforcement action if a tree poses a risk to public health and safety, and should not be confused or duplicated with other efforts. Education regarding the City's nuisance tree ordinance should be administered by the City Forester.

### **Fiscal Impact**

N/A

**Recommendation**

N/A

Attachments:

None



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**Buildings and Grounds**

**TO: Milwaukee River Advisory Committee**  
**FROM: Nate Herlache, City Forester**  
**DATE: March 5, 2026**  
**SUBJECT: High-water markings at the Villa Grove ramp and the Highland Road bridge**

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**Background**

Updating documented high-water marks at the Villa Grove Boat Ramp and the Highland Road Bridge is an important step in maintaining accurate flood reference information for public safety, infrastructure planning, and emergency response. High-water markers provide a visual record of past flood events and help inform residents, staff, and decision-makers about flood risk, changing water levels, and potential impacts to nearby properties and public facilities. Periodic review and updating of these markers ensures that they reflect the most current and reliable data, particularly following recent high-water events or improved surveying methods. Maintaining accurate high-water information supports flood preparedness, public awareness, and long-term planning efforts within the river corridor.

**Analysis**

Updating high-water marks at the Villa Grove Boat Ramp and the Highland Road Bridge will require coordination to ensure accuracy, visibility, and public awareness. Committee members working in collaboration with the local Police Department can help verify locations, support safe access during installation or surveying activities, and assist in documenting high-water events as they occur. Police involvement may also enhance public communication efforts by reinforcing awareness of flood risks and helping disseminate information during high-water conditions or emergency situations. This coordinated approach supports accurate recordkeeping while strengthening interdepartmental collaboration and community preparedness, ensuring the markers serve both operational and educational purposes over time.

**Fiscal Impact**

N/A

**Recommendation**

N/A

Attachments:

High Water Marker Photos





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**Buildings and Grounds**

**TO: Milwaukee River Advisory Committee**  
**FROM: Nate Herlache, City Forester**  
**DATE: March 5, 2026**  
**SUBJECT: Purple Loosestrife along the Milwaukee River and tributaries**

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### **Background**

Purple Loosestrife is an invasive wetland plant that has been present within portions of the local river and adjacent riparian areas, where it can outcompete native vegetation, reduce habitat quality, and alter ecological functions. Past management efforts have included monitoring, manual removal, and use of safe contact pesticides. Continued discussion is intended to review the effectiveness of prior actions, assess current conditions, and consider potential future management strategies.

### **Analysis**

The continued presence of Purple Loosestrife within the river corridor indicates that while past management efforts such as monitoring, manual removal, and targeted herbicide applications have helped limit spread in certain areas, ongoing attention is needed to prevent further establishment. Evaluating the effectiveness of previous treatments can help determine whether current methods are sufficient or if adjustments in timing, frequency, or approach may improve outcomes. Consideration may also be given to prioritizing high-value habitat areas, improving early detection practices, and identifying opportunities to coordinate efforts across properties to increase overall effectiveness.

Future actions may involve balancing resource availability, environmental considerations, and long-term maintenance needs while ensuring that control methods remain consistent with best management practices. Any chemical applications should be evaluated against the City's stormwater permit terms and conditions prior to application. The Committee may also consider reviewing the entire WDNR invasive species list, before selecting only one invasive species to manage. Continued discussion can help clarify goals, establish realistic management expectations, and support a coordinated strategy that reduces ecological impacts while making efficient use of staff time and available funding.

### **Fiscal Impact**

N/A

**Recommendation**

N/A

Attachments:

WDNR - Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol and You



# PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE BIOCONTROL — AND YOU

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Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a flowering plant that can reach 3'-7' tall and is listed as a Restricted Invasive Species in Wisconsin because of its history of causing negative ecological impacts to wetlands and shorelines. Extensive populations of the plants that were found throughout the state by the latter half of the 1900s have been brought down to a manageable level in most areas thanks to tiny beetles and the people who rear and release them where needed.

- Check out the [purple loosestrife \(\*Lythrum salicaria\*\) fact sheet](#).
- Learn about [purple loosestrife identification and management](#) [PDF].
- Learn about approved [purple loosestrife biocontrol species](#) [exit DNR].

Wisconsin DNR has been using four insects from Europe to control purple loosestrife since 1994. Careful research has shown that all four control species, referred to as biological agents, do not threaten native plants or cause other issues. For example, they do not overwinter in our homes. The process is classic biocontrol, and it is likely the best long-term control for purple loosestrife, reducing the need for other more costly and disruptive methods, such as herbicides or large-scale digging.

Two "Cella" beetle species (*Galerucella californiensis* and *G. pusilla*) provide highly effective control by feeding on leaves and shoots. A root-boring weevil, *Hylobius transversovittatus*, can be effective but is difficult to monitor for success. A second weevil, *Nanophyes marmoratus*, feeds primarily on the flowers, reducing the amount of seed the plants can produce. It appears to have naturalized in some locations since being released in the early years of the three-decade biocontrol program.

Though elimination is rare, biocontrol offers effective and environmentally sound control of the plant without herbicides. The *Galerucella* sp. beetles are easy to rear, place where they are needed and will spread to new locations on their own. They successfully decrease the vigor, size and seed output of purple loosestrife, allowing native plants to grow and compete. The purple loosestrife that remains can provide some benefits to pollinators when it is not eradicated. Keeping some of the plants in the landscape is also important for maintaining healthy populations of beetles for ongoing purple loosestrife management. Successful biocontrol typically ranges from one to several years, depending on such factors as a site's size and the purple loosestrife's density. Once purple loosestrife is well managed or removed, it's important to prevent new invasive species from spreading into the open space. Native species or their seeds may not be present or abundant, so consider adding native plants to your sites.

# WISCONSIN'S EFFORTS TO CONTROL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

Since 1997, over a thousand people across the state have shared in the fun of rearing beetles and releasing them into local purple loosestrife populations in wetlands, lake and river shorelines, and ditches. Some folks have participated for over 20 years! There are several ways to help. The training videos below provide an overview of the program and describe the activities needed to be successful. Most projects are coordinated through a County's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator or other local program leaders. Find the contact information for your County AIS Coordinator and the WDNR Regional AIS Biologists on our [Aquatic Invasive Species contacts](#) page.

**Important to remember:** A permit is required because the process involves moving a WI-restricted invasive species from one location to another. The application can be found below in the Forms section.

Because *Galerucella* sp. beetles are now naturalized throughout Wisconsin, the DNR does not provide the parent beetles for rearing or release. This is not clearly stated in the current version of the program application. However, County AIS Coordinators and the Statewide Coordinator can assist in finding parent beetles in most cases. Collecting the beetles is what many people enjoy the most. "Collecting Beetles" is one of the training videos below.

## TRAINING

- [Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Program Overview and Instructions](#) [PDF] guide.
- [Volunteer and staff job descriptions for beetle rearing and release](#).
- Check out the [biocontrol program quick guide](#) [PDF] filled with pictures and the most important how-to information.
- This chart can help you determine what method or combination of methods make the most sense for your site: [Integrated Pest Management for Purple Loosestrife, including Biocontrol](#) [PDF].
- Video Training Series:
  - [Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Program Overview](#) (21 minutes)
  - [Digging, Potting, and Care of Your Plants](#) (19 minutes)
  - [Preparing Your Netting](#) (5 minutes)
  - [Making a Beetle Trap](#) (4 minutes)
  - [Collecting Beetles](#) (17 minutes)
  - [Winter Monitoring](#) (8 minutes)

## FORMS

- **To join the program**, download and complete this [application](#) [PDF] to send it to the address below.
- **To report beetle release**, download and complete the [Purple loosestrife Beetle Release Form](#) [PDF].
- **To assess beetle activity** at newly found and previously managed purple loosestrife patches, download and complete the [Purple loosestrife Beetle Presence and Activity Report Form](#) [PDF].

**Note:** Many current browsers do not open PDF files automatically. If you experience trouble opening or filling out a PDF form, visit the DNR [PDF help](#) <sup>[PDF]</sup> <sup>?</sup> for instructions on how to open PDF files successfully.

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS

- See [Cella Chow](#) <sup>[PDF]</sup>! Here you'll find lesson plans for grades 6-12 built around the science of biocontrol, specifically purple loosestrife. The lessons include a listing of the related Wisconsin Model Environmental Education and Science Standards.

Purple loosestrife is here to stay in Wisconsin, but you can encourage it to “play nice” with native plants by reuniting it locally with its natural predators. As biocontrol reduces purple loosestrife, you can experience even more satisfaction by helping to restore any native plants that may have been crowded out, further ensuring diverse, healthy wetlands!

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Find the contact information for your County AIS Coordinator and the WDNR Regional AIS Biologists on our [Aquatic Invasive Species contacts](#) page. Additionally, you may email [DNRAISinfo@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRAISinfo@wisconsin.gov) and our staff can direct you to the correct contact.

