



GOLDEN SANDS

RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.

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Conservation That Works!

West Branch Millpond, Waushara County Point Intercept Aquatic Plant Survey August 17 & 19, 2021

Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc (RC&D) staff Chris Hamerla and Kendra Kunding completed a Point Intercept Aquatic Plant Survey (PI Survey) on West Branch Millpond on Aug. 17th & 19th, 2021. The survey was completed as follow up to diver assisted suction harvesting (DASH) management for Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM). This monitoring data can be used to show progress over time and used by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff to understand what type of management is needed for EWM.

Benefits of Aquatic Plants

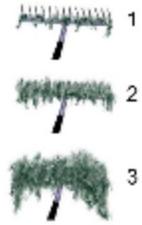
Aquatic plants are an important part of the state's wet ecosystems. They produce oxygen and help protect water quality. They help clarify water in wetlands, lakes and rivers by using nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen that might otherwise be used to produce algal blooms. Aquatic plants help reduce wave action and current flow which reduces shoreland erosion and helps stabilize sediments in the waterbody. Perhaps most apparent, plants provide food, shelter and habitat for fish, invertebrates and all sorts of wildlife. Finally, diverse, healthy plant communities can help prevent invasive species from establishing. Invasive species are more likely to become established in disturbed areas.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are plants or animals that are not native to a particular area and dominate an area where they are introduced. They can be very successful because they fill a niche that isn't occupied, are able to tolerate a wider range of living conditions, they don't have any natural predators or diseases or perhaps they begin growing earlier. EWM, curly leaf pondweed and purple loosestrife are common examples of AIS. AIS can threaten an area both ecologically and economically. They can disrupt food chains and degrade habitat which negatively impacts fish, invertebrates and wildlife. Nuisance levels of AIS can reduce or even prevent recreational opportunities like fishing, boating, wildlife watching, etc... These reduced recreational opportunities have negative impacts to the local and statewide economy. AIS such as zebra mussels can negatively impact water quality, food chains, aquatic habitat, recreation and industry. Unfortunately the effects of AIS are difficult to foresee since the degree of impact can vary greatly from one place to another. One system may be completely taken over by AIS while AIS in another nearby system may become a part of the community and have little to no negative effects.

Point Intercept Aquatic Plant Surveys

Illustration of
Rake Fullness
Rating



Point intercept (PI) surveys are completed by traveling to predetermined GPS points across the lake. Each PI lake map is based on the area and depth specific to that lake. The maps with GPS coordinates are obtained through the WDNR. West Branch Millpond contains 251 sample points. Using a GPS, staff traveled by kayak to 248 of the GPS points, the other 3 points were non-navigable (too shallow, within a roped off swim area, etc.). At each point a two-sided rake was used to sample roughly a one foot area of the lake bottom. Sediment type (sand, rock or muck), water depth in half foot increments and the aquatic plant community was recorded. Once the rake is brought to the surface the amount of plant material on the rake is assessed and recorded. The overall fullness of plants on the rake is rated a one, two or three (see illustration to the left). Then the individual species are ranked using a one, two or three. All data is recorded on the PI worksheet. Plants seen within six feet of the sample point are

recorded as a “visual”. (Figure 1 shows map with survey points and EWM locations.) Other plants seen on the lake are recorded as a “boat survey”. To learn more about PI sampling methods and how data is collected please visit:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Documents/ecology/Aquatic%20Plants/PL-Protocol-2010.pdf>

Frequency of occurrence is the percentage of time a species is found out of the total number of points sampled. Not all sample points are capable of supporting plant growth. *Littoral frequency of occurrence* is how often a species is found out of the total number of points that support plant growth. (Shown in Table 1) The deepest depth where plant growth is found is called *maximum depth of plant growth*. *Species richness* is the total number of different species found on the rake while sampling points. *Floristic Quality Index (FQI)* is the ranking of the plants in the lake that compares to an undisturbed lake. The higher the FQI the closer the plant community is to that of an undisturbed system. Approximately 250 lakes across Wisconsin are used to calculate the statewide and ecoregion averages for comparison. Table 2 summarizes the lake’s littoral frequency of occurrence, maximum depth of plant growth, species richness and FQI.

It should be noted that plant species may differ from year to year, this can be seen on Table 1 comparing littoral frequency of occurrence over the past three years. As well as the EWM population over the past three years in Figures 1-3. GPS coordinates are accurate only within twenty feet and plant communities can shift. Table 1 represents only those species which were detected on the rake during the survey.

Table 1: Species Present

Common Name	Scientific Name	Plant type: floating leaf, free floating, submergent, emergent	2021 % Littoral Frequency of Occurrence	2020 % Littoral Frequency of Occurrence	2019 % Littoral Frequency of Occurrence
Muskgrasses	<i>Chara sp.</i>	submergent	80.17	84.35	78.72
Nothern water milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum sibiricum</i>	submergent	24.38	33.91	17.87
Wild celery	<i>Vallisneria americana</i>	submergent	26.86	27.83	34.47
*Eurasian water	<i>Myriophyllum</i>	submergent	21.07	23.48	21.28

milfoil	<i>spicatum</i>				
Sago pondweed	<i>Stuckenia pectinata</i>	submergent	14.46	22.17	15.32
Coontail	<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i>	submergent	9.09	8.70	4.68
Common waterweed	<i>Elodea canadensis</i>	submergent	8.68	8.26	6.81
Flat-stem pondweed	<i>Potamogeton zosteriformis</i>	submergent	2.48	7.39	5.11
Fries pondweed	<i>Potamogeton friesii</i>	submergent	10.74	7.39	9.79
Southern naiad	<i>Najas guadalupensis</i>	submergent	10.74	6.96	15.32
Slender naiad	<i>Najas flexilis</i>	submergent	-----	6.09	9.79
Illinois pondweed	<i>Potamogeton illinoensis</i>	submergent	2.89	4.35	1.28
White-stem pondweed	<i>Potamogeton praelongus</i>	submergent	3.72	3.91	5.53
Common bladderwort	<i>Utricularia vulgaris</i>	free floating	2.89	3.48	2.98
Nitella sp	<i>Nitella sp.</i>	submergent	-----	3.48	8.94
Filamentous algae	-----	free floating	2.89	3.04	2.55
Water star-grass	<i>Heteranthera dubia</i>	submergent	4.55	2.61	2.98
White water crowfoot	<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>	submergent	2.48	2.61	0.85
Small bladderwort	<i>Utricularia minor</i>	free floating	-----	1.30	-----
Fine-leaved pondweed	<i>Stuckenia filiformis</i>	submergent	0.83	0.87	1.28
Large-leaf pondweed	<i>Potamogeton amplifolius</i>	submergent	-----	0.87	Visual only
Aquatic moss	-----	submergent	0.83	0.43	1.28
*Curly-leaf pondweed	<i>Potamogeton crispus</i>	submergent	-----	0.43	1.70
Leafy pondweed	<i>Potamogeton foliosus</i>	submergent	-----	0.43	0.43
Small pondweed	<i>Potamogeton pusillus</i>	submergent	0.41	0.43	0.43
White water lily	<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>	Floating leaf	Visual only	0.43	0.43

Horned pondweed	<i>Zannichellia palustris</i>	submergent	Visual only	1.28	1.28
Needle Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>	submergent	0.41	0.43	0.43
Small duckweed	<i>Lemna minor</i>	free floating	0.83	0.43	0.43
Turion duckweed	<i>Lemna turionifera</i>	free floating	-----	-----	-----

% Littoral frequency of occurrence: This is calculated by taking the total number of times a species is recorded divided by the total number of points in the lake where plant growth is possible.

* means a non-native species, potentially invasive.

Table 2: Lake Survey Summary

	Lake	Statewide Average	North Central Hardwoods Forests Ecoregion Average
Littoral Frequency of Occurrence (%)	96.3	74.3	76.0
Maximum Depth of Plant Growth	23	15.3	15.9
Species Richness	20	16.8	16.2
Floristic Quality Index (FQI)	25.7	24.1	23.3

Figure 1: 2021 EWM Sites and Densities

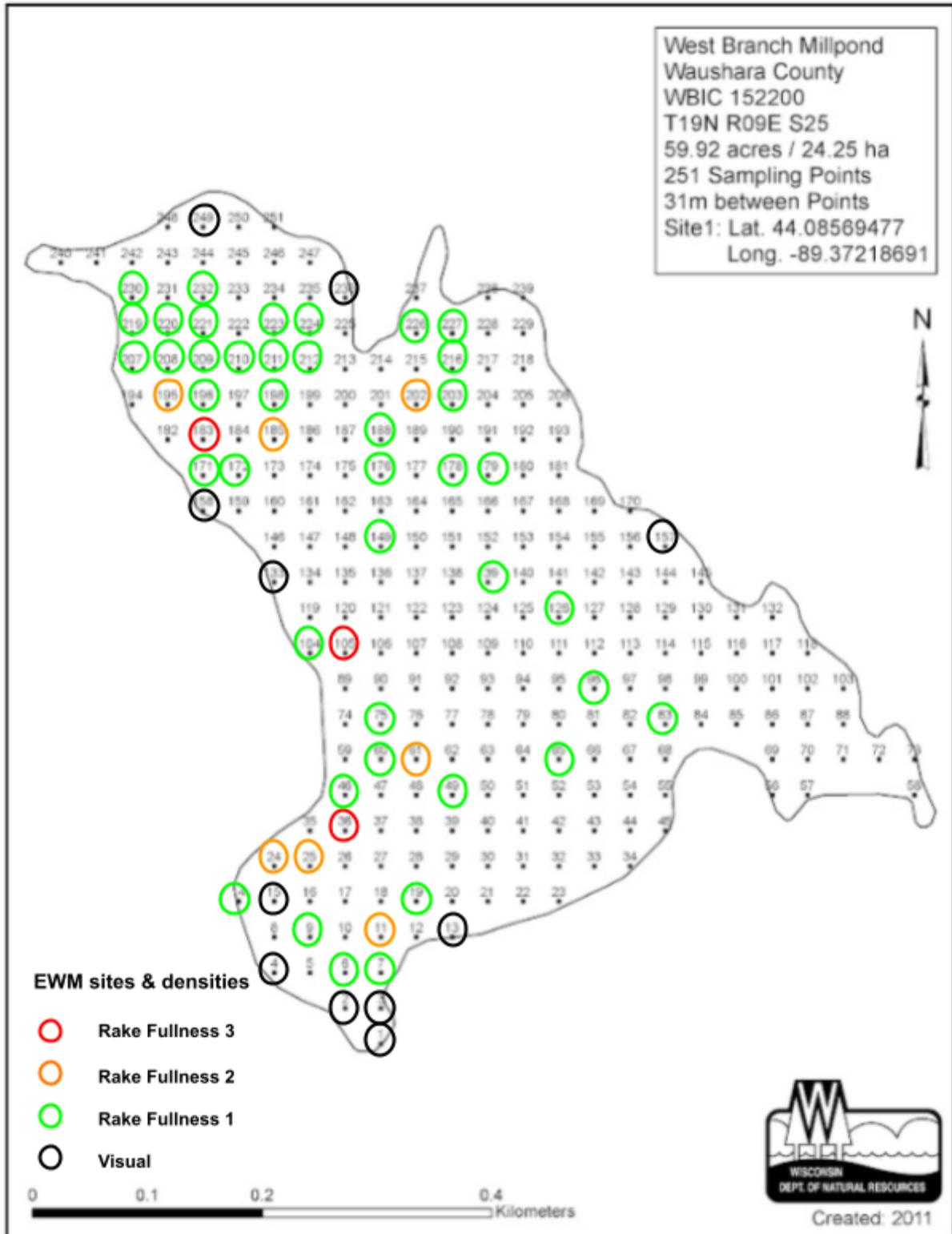


Figure 2: 2020 EWM Sites and Densities

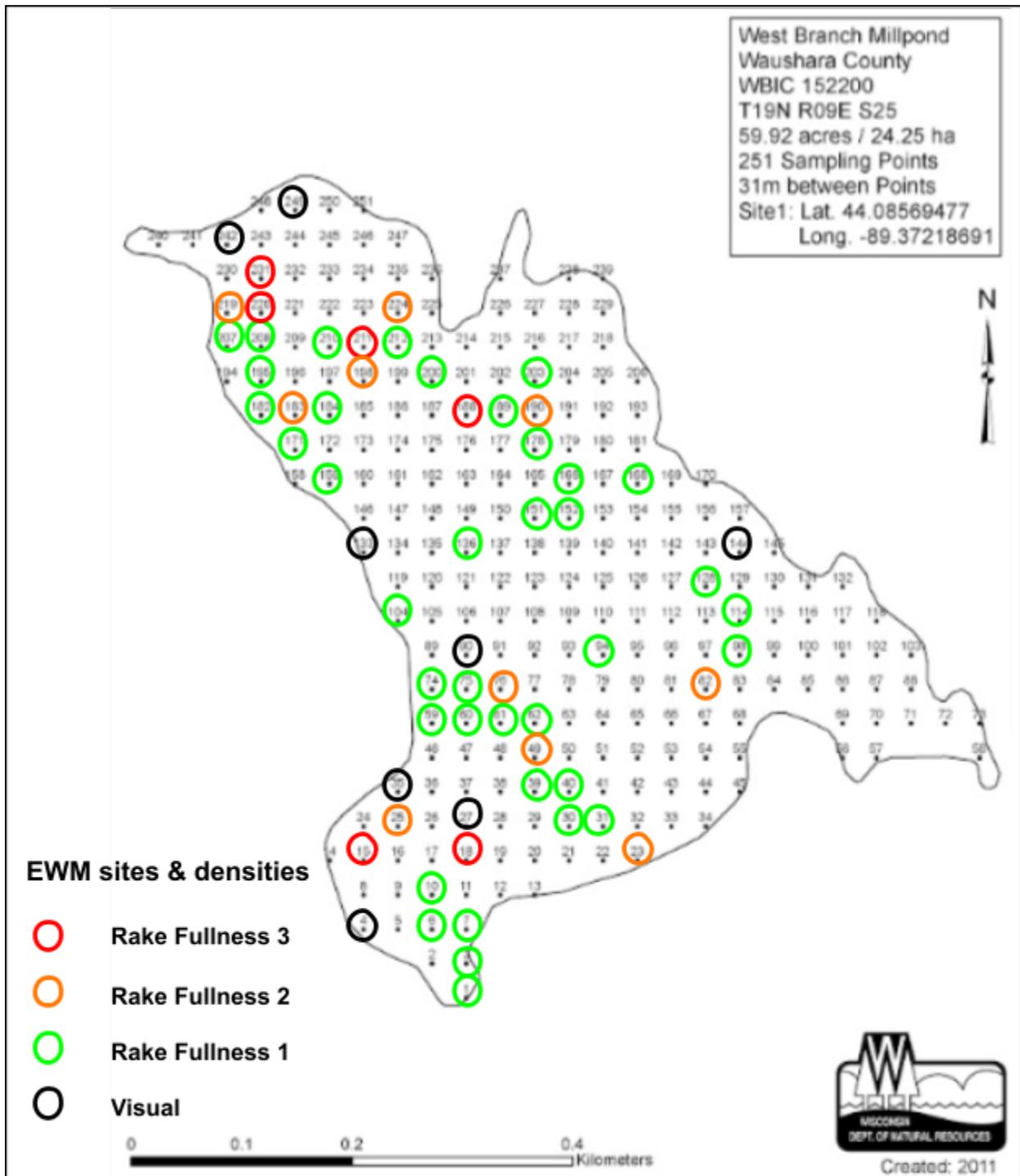
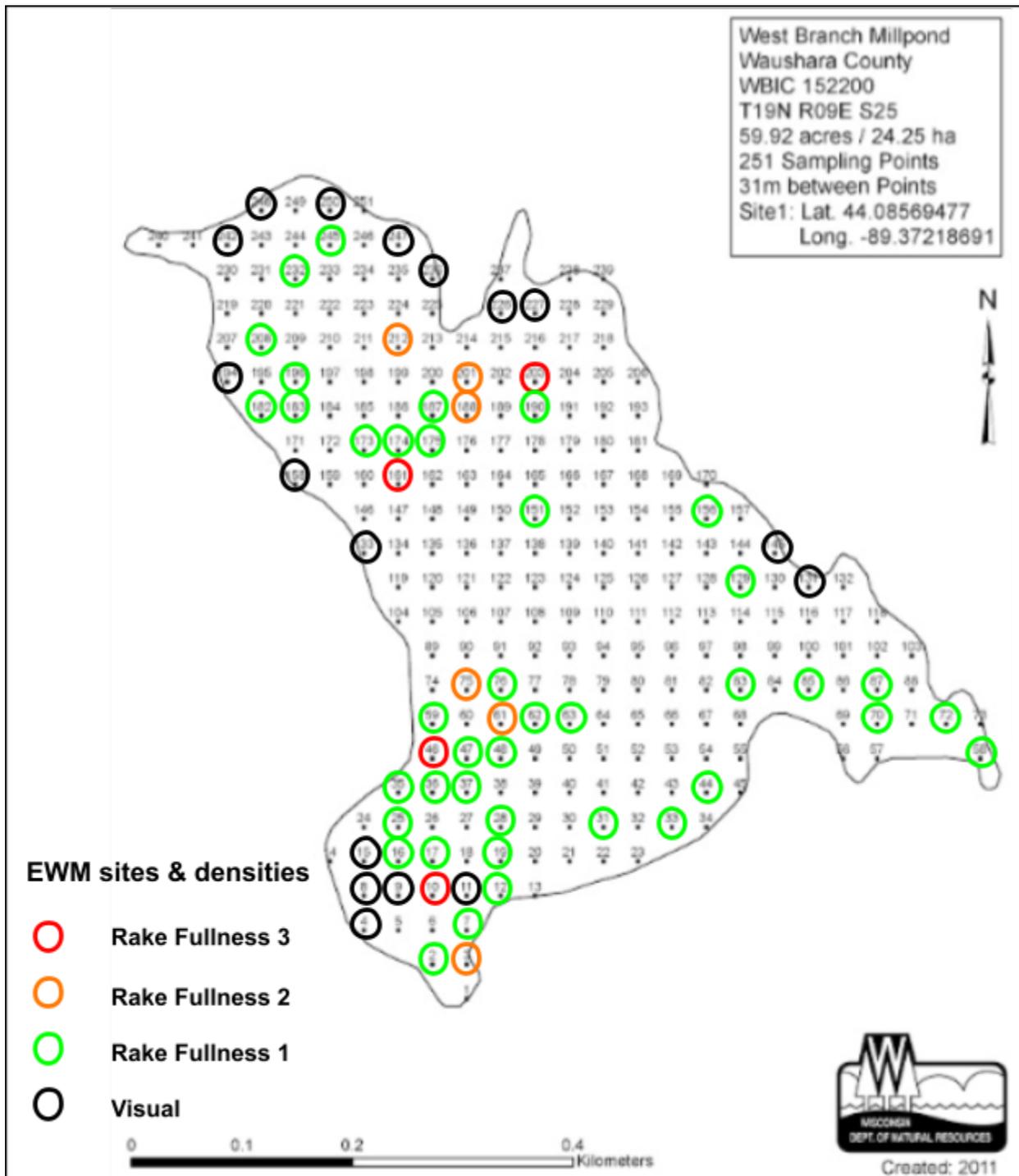


Figure 3: 2019 EWM Sites and Densities



If there are any questions regarding the PI survey or results please contact Golden Sands RC&D, Chris Hamerla, Chris.Hamerla@goldensandsrcd.org, (715) 343-6215 ext. 704 or Kendra Kunding, kendra.kunding@goldensandsrcd.org, (715) 343-6215 ext. 705.