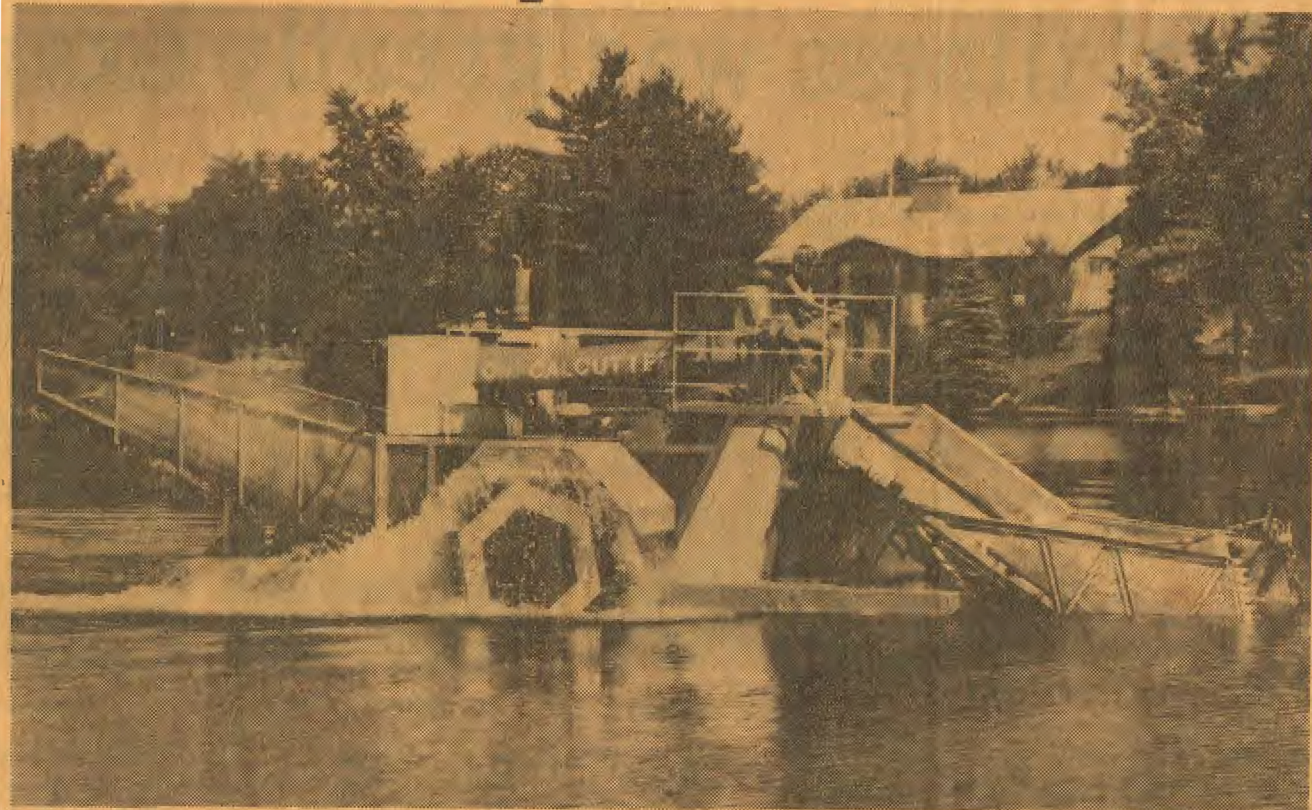


# Harvester put to test on several Oakland lakes



By JOSEPH L. CISNEROS  
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ORION TWP. — A weird looking, seven-ton machine is plucking about 15 tons of a weeds a day from Indianwood Lake.

The harvester, which was developed by two young men from Bloomfield Hills, has been put to the test on several Oakland County lakes this summer.

"We are booked up through mid-August," says Roger Cantelon, 23, who operates Inland Lakes Weed Harvesting with 27-year-old partner Eric Gleisner.

Cantelon says the harvester was "made from a pile of steel," and patterned after a similar machine belonging to the county. He says his interest in developing a weed-cutting machine was spurred by concern over the harmful effects to lakes of chemical weed treatment.

The device looks like an over-sized combination paddle wheel and pontoon boat. A gate-like snout equipped with double blades dips into the lake and cuts weeds at a depth of 5-6 feet as the harvester chugs along about 5 mph.

Weeds, small pan fish, crabs and an occasional turtle are stored aboard until the craft is fully loaded and the contents are then dumped on the shore, to be hauled away for use as fertilizer.

"It takes 15 minutes to an hour to get a full load, depending on how thick the weeds are," says Denyce Hindson, 18, of

1615 Square Lake Road, who is employed for the summer to operate the harvester.

The bikini-clad Miss Hindson said the blades of the harvester turn up more than weeds. "You get a lot of logs and occasionally you find an old sunken boat," she says.

Larger game fish swim out of reach of conveyors that haul the weeds aboard the craft, Miss Hindson says.

Toivo Somer, president of the 145-member Indianwood Improvement Association, says the \$6,500 the association is paying for 100 hours of harvesting is a sound investment.

"It is like maintaining your lawn," says Somer. "We have accepted the fact that inland lakes are dying from pollution. The best we can do is maintain them in usable condition."

Somer says that even though the harvesting technique must be repeated each summer it is less expensive than chemical treatment and has no known ecological drawbacks.

Use of chemicals to curb weed growth is tightly controlled by government regulations, and treating the entire lake could have cost up to \$20,000, Somer says.

The Bloomfield Hills firm charges \$60 an hour to cut weeds from county lakes, and Cantelon says "it's kind of an eyedropper approach to a massive problem."

Denyce Hindson operates the weed harvester on Indianwood Lake

Oakland Press photo by Tim Thompson