

LAKESIDE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE LAKES ASSOCIATION

Exotic Aquatic Plants in New Hampshire: A Status Update

by Amy P. Smagula, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
Exotic Species Program Coordinator

For some of you worried about exotic aquatic plants in your lake, winter marks a time of relative peace, right? Some of you are probably feeling relieved because you made it through another summer without exotic aquatic plants identified in your waterbody. For others, you are going into winter thinking about what you are going to do to control the exotic plant in your lake next summer, and if it will be worse next year than it has been in past years. Either way, winter is not a time to put away thoughts of exotic species, but rather a time to plan your strategy for next year to continue your efforts of prevention, early detection, and/or control of exotic aquatic plants in your lake or pond.

The extent of the problem

As of Fall 2009, 73 waterbodies in New Hampshire are host to growths of exotic aquatic plants. The total number of infestations, however, is at 84. This means that some waterbodies support one or more types of exotic aquatic plants, with a few supporting as many as five competing non-native species! A map of the current distribution of exotic aquatic plants can be found on the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services' (DES) website at des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/exoticspecies/exotic_plant_map.htm.

Just one new waterbody was added to the list of infested waterbodies in 2009, and that was Upper Goodwin Point Pond in Concord, with an infestation of variable milfoil. The pond is an old oxbow basin of the Merrimack River now surrounded by private land used as farm fields. The infestation was documented by DES biologists as part of a lake assessment sampling effort. The milfoil in the pond is widespread and not new, but, since the pond is not accessed by many people, the infestation went unknown.

Variable milfoil is still, by far, the state's largest problem when it comes to exotic aquatic plants. Currently, 64 waterbodies have growths of this aggressive plant. Unfortunately, all waterbodies in New Hampshire are susceptible to variable milfoil.

Fanwort is the next most dominant exotic species. This plant is found in nine waterbodies and seems to be the most problematic plant in southeastern New Hampshire, specifically in the towns of Derry, Sandown, Hudson, and Auburn.

Water chestnut is currently in only one waterbody in New Hampshire (Nashua River), but, as it is a northerly flowing river that connects into the Merrimack, another waterbody may eventually be added to the infested list. Water chestnut was first documented in the Nashua River in 1998, and it has remained isolated to this waterbody since that time. Interestingly, the NH LAKES Lake Host™ Program has documented many occurrences of the woody seed of this plant attached to carpeted bunks of boat trailers. Biologists expect that this will be the next big



Members dedicated to protecting lakes

Volume XVIII, No. 4, Winter 2010

NH LAKES' New Innovative Exotic Weed Control Grant Program

If your lake has an exotic aquatic plant infestation, whether it is new or old, then you will want to participate in this new grant program!

Thanks to Senator Judd Gregg, NH LAKES has secured federal funding to help lake associations and municipalities manage their exotic infestations in 2010. Matching grant awards of up to \$5,000 will be available to assist local groups in their efforts to purchase or construct Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting systems, hire Certified Weed Control divers to harvest infestations, and implement other forms of non-chemical control. For more information, visit www.nhlakes.org, email info@nhlakes.org or call (603) 226-0299. Grant applications will be due in mid-February.

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LAKESIDE

published quarterly by the

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From the President...



January ushered in a new year with a chilly reminder of winter in New England—and things we can do to continue to enjoy and celebrate our lakes. Whether your preference is ice fishing or ice sailing, or something in-between, our lakes in winter offer many opportunities to get outside and have fun.

In fact, this winter, we invite you to join us in celebrating 'all things frozen' about lakes at our first annual IceFest on Saturday, February 6, at the Castleton Banquet & Conference Center on Cobbetts Pond in Windham. This is an event for the whole family, with a chili cook-off, ice sculpting, ice fishing demonstrations and more! Don't be left out in the cold—embrace it with us!

Of course, to promote the wise stewardship of our lakes, there is no "off-season" for us here

at NH LAKES. The winter months provide another opportunity to enhance or create new programs and projects to better protect our lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. This year, we are pleased to unveil our new Innovative Exotic Weed Control Grant Program designed to work with local lake associations and municipalities to help provide meaningful alternative control methods to eradicating variable milfoil and other exotic invasive aquatic species. And, the 2010 legislative session is already underway—NH LAKES is excited about our most ambitious agenda ever! With initiatives dealing with phosphorus reduction, septic systems, invasive aquatic weeds and health insurance (yes, *health insurance*), there is certainly something for everyone to support.

As always, please call us or stop by with your questions or concerns. And, I hope you find some time to relax and *chill* out this winter with family and friends along one of our 1,000 lakes and ponds.

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problem plant species if those seeds remain viable during transport. Unfortunately, these seeds have a long dormancy period and may not immediately germinate if introduced to a new waterbody. The good news is that the plant is very distinctive in its appearance, and, if caught growing early, simple hand-removal can help keep it under control.

Brazilian elodea is still only found in one waterbody in New Hampshire, and that is Nutts Pond in Manchester. Fortunately, there are not many transient boaters using this waterbody so the risk of spread is low, but the pond does outlet to a stream that feeds the Merrimack River, which could potentially support growths of this plant.

Eurasian milfoil is the other problematic milfoil in New Hampshire. This plant, unlike its cousin variable milfoil, is not an aggressive colonizer in our waterbodies, likely due to the acidic nature of our state's surface waters. Lake Mascoma in Enfield and Mountain Pond in Brookfield are the only two lakes with this species of milfoil, but there are several sites along the New Hampshire banks of the Connecticut River that are infested with this exotic plant, particularly at public access sites along the river and backwater areas.

There are exotic species of concern to add to this list, including hydrilla which is not yet here, but it is now in two waterbodies in Maine and in three in Massachusetts. Curly leaf pondweed is also on the rise in New Hampshire, mainly in western ponds and more urban ponds where the pH and alkalinity tend to be higher (a requirement for this plant species). It is also important to remember that not all of our lake problem species will be from the plant kingdom. Animals, namely the zebra mussel, are a looming threat. These often triangular shaped organisms with dark and white zebra-like patterns on their shells have invaded a few Vermont waterbodies, two lakes in Connecticut, and most recently were identified in a lake in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts.

What you can do!

There are many potential problem species to look for in your waterbody so it may seem overwhelming, but the best thing to remember is that you should trust your instincts. If something looks odd or out of place in the water, never hesitate to send a sample to DES through the mail (PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03301, Attn: Amy Smagula), or send a digital picture of the species of concern for identifica-

tion to me at Amy.

Smagula@des.nh.gov.

By systematically checking your lake and pond each year, particularly at the beginning and end of each growing season, but preferably once a month, you can do a lot towards finding new infestations early, and warding off full-lake infestations of problematic species. If you are not already trained and participating in the Volunteer Weed Watcher Program, contact me at Amy. Smagula@des.nh.gov or (603) 271-2248 and ask about how to obtain training and materials.



Variable milfoil, as found by this NH LAKES Lake Host in Meredith, is the number one offending exotic aquatic plant in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds.



Eurasian milfoil has infested two lakes in New Hampshire.



Fanwort has infested nine waterbodies in New Hampshire.



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Is there an Exotic Species Infested Waterbody in your Town?

by Ken Marschner, Wolfeboro Milfoil Committee Chairman

The Town of Wolfeboro in the Lakes Region has within its boundaries a small river, streams, ponds, lakes and bays that cover approximately 10.3 square miles. Four of the five significant bodies of water in Wolfeboro have had variable milfoil infestations for at least a decade or longer. The town selectmen in 2004 formed a nine-member milfoil control committee to combat the quickly spreading plant. The committee, under the auspices of the town manager and the selectmen, consists of concerned citizens, a liaison from the selectmen, and a conservation commission member.

The committee drafted a vision statement, guiding principles, and desired outcomes. The long-term outcomes after five years of effort are beginning to be realized, but much more remains to be done to sustain progress. The committee's projected outcomes include:

1. Town waters will be devoid of variable milfoil thereby promoting ecologic stability and producing improved water quality for recreational uses.
2. More visitors will be attracted to Wolfeboro to enjoy the aesthetic qualities of weed-free waterways, and local businesses will thrive as employment increases through enhanced tourism.
3. Property values along the shorelines will be sustained or appreciated.
4. Funding sources and educational initiatives will be developed through public/private partnerships to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive plants and to continue the monitoring and control of such plants into the future.
5. A proactive, milfoil-control model will be created for other towns and lake associations.

Accomplishing the above has required the milfoil committee to communicate regularly with other lake association members, the conservation commission, and news media. Concurrently, maintaining high visibility and

continuous transparency with local citizens has been paramount for community support.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) Exotic Species Program drafted five-year milfoil management plans for three of the four infested bodies of water in Wolfeboro.

Using an integrated management approach of chemical treatment, manual hand pulling and suction harvesting of milfoil by certified divers has helped mitigate the variable milfoil. Back Bay (35 acres), within the town's center and most highly infested body of water, has received two complete treatments with 2,4-D aquatic herbicide and one partial treatment. Hand pulling and suction harvesting have occurred before and after the chemical treatments, except the first treatment in the spring of 2005.

The reduction of milfoil by the fall of 2009 approached 98 - 99% with no visible impact to indigenous aquatic plants or to observable fish and birdlife inhabiting Back Bay. Re-growth is always a potential issue but removal of milfoil is a war of attrition that takes years to accomplish without any break over a subsequent summer. Constant vigilance through regular weed watching and rapidly responding to re-growth is essential to reduce the milfoil to a "diminishing returns level."

What lessons have been learned over the last five years?

1. Establishing a long-term milfoil management plan for each body of water is necessary to achieve a satisfactory level of success.
2. Getting town officials to understand no quick fixes are available in dealing with milfoil and that having a steady source of financial funding is critical to maintain removal efforts for at least five years.
3. Milfoil committee members must be

committed to share the responsibilities and leadership roles. Maintaining a high-level group that has a "staying-on-task" mentality through the easier times (observing contractor activity) and in harder times (public hearings) provides the impetus to reaching goals.

4. Using chemical treatment can polarize a community. Seeking technical assistance from DES, contractor experience, and other knowledgeable individuals to provide understandable scientific answers for those concerned about risks and to dispel misinformation quickly is paramount in an integrated milfoil abatement approach.

The Wolfeboro Milfoil Committee would be remiss not to mention the ever helpful Exotic Species Program of DES, especially the assistance of Amy Smagula and Jody Connor. A special thank you also goes to the New Hampshire Lakes Association and its Lake Host™ Program for assisting with preventative and educational information.

If your town has an exotic species infested waterbody, you need a milfoil committee! The Wolfeboro Milfoil Committee can help get you started. Contact Ken at marschner@metrocast.net for more information.



Exotic aquatic plant infestations, like this fanwort (surrounding) and variable milfoil (middle) infestation, require an integrated management approach. Photo courtesy of Bob Patterson of AB Aquatics.

2009 Lake Host Program Makes Record-breaking "Saves!"

Despite reduced funding and a very rainy start to the summer, approximately 420 volunteer and 236 paid Lake Hosts conducting courtesy boat inspections removed a record-breaking total of 297 fragments of exotic aquatic plants hitchhiking on boats and trailers in 2009! This eighth year of the NH Lakes Lake Host™ Program clearly showed how very critical this prevention and education program is at serving as the first line of defense protecting New Hampshire's lakes from the spread of devastating exotic plants, like variable milfoil. New records were also set in 2009 for the number of lakes and ponds being protected by the program, as shown in the table below.

Lake Host Program Summary

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of Participating Organizations	38	46	51	56	57	68	70	71
Number of Paid Lake Hosts	102	149	190	175	204	221	240	236
Number of Volunteer Lake Hosts	59	167	216	318	353	429	470	420
Number of Lakes and Ponds with Lake Hosts	37	45	50	56	56	64	70	71
Number of Ramps Covered	45	59	61	61	66	83	88	86
Number of Inspections Conducted	15,878	26,583	31,629	34,878	34,573	44,183	55,924	53,756
Number of "saves" (exotic plants found)	4	7	16	54	54	157	224	297
Federal Funds	\$ 260,100	\$10,000	\$85,300	\$35,000	\$117,000	\$117,000	\$89,206	\$89,206
State Funds	\$0	\$165,000	\$150,000	\$185,000	\$185,000	\$185,000	\$161,000	\$123,333
Private Foundations								\$4,000
Local Funds (hard cash and cash-equivalents)	\$37,155	\$112,382	\$151,238	\$200,756	\$183,179	\$292,017	\$334,061	\$341,535
NH LAKES Youth Employment Program Match								\$32,944
TOTAL PROGRAM	\$297,255	\$287,382	\$386,538	\$420,756	\$485,179	\$594,017	\$584,267	\$591,018

* For the complete list of exotic species "saves" made through the 2009 program, visit www.nhlakes.org.

Please help support the future of the Lake Host Program

We are happy to report that in 2011 an increase in state funding will be available to support exotic aquatic species prevention programs, including the Lake Host Program, thanks to a bill that was passed by the legislature in 2009.

Unfortunately, federal funding will not be available in 2010 to support the Lake Host Program. And, as of the writing of this article, the level of state funding available for the 2010 program is unknown. Therefore, NH LAKES is working on securing financial support from private foundations and other sources to supplement the 2010 program. **Please help us make up the federal funding deficit by donating to the 2010 Lake Host Program.** You can use the enclosed postage-paid envelope, or you can easily donate through our secure website at www.nhlakes.org/form_donate.asp. **Any amount will help!**

If your group would like to participate in the 2010 Lake Host Program to protect your lake from the spread of exotic aquatic plants, please visit the NH LAKES website at www.nhlakes.org in mid-February to download a grant application.



NH LAKES Lake Hosts inspect all boats and trailers before they enter and just after they leave a waterbody to remove hitchhiking exotic aquatic plant fragments and teach boaters how to do so when a Lake Host is not present at the launch.

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Weed Control Classes Beginning May 2010

Are you a certified open water diver?

If you are, then why not become a certified Weed Control Diver by taking the Weed Control Diver course this spring?

It is the sincere hope of those who created the Weed Control Diver course that the students who complete the course will become part of a crusade to identify and effectively and safely remove problematic invasive exotic aquatic plants. Once exotic milfoil or another invasive



Two female divers head out for a day of harvesting variable milfoil. Photo courtesy of Bob Patterson of AB Aquatics.

exotic plant infests a waterbody, there is generally no hope of eradication unless integrated approaches are employed early and strategically. The Weed Control Diver may play a major role in keeping New Hampshire's lakes and rivers open for recreational use by our citizens and visitors.

Though this course is designed to provide divers with the knowledge and skills necessary to help combat milfoil and other exotic aquatic plant problems in New Hampshire, it cannot substitute for practice. Two open water dives do not make a milfoil harvester. It will take work, tenacity and a willingness to spend many hours in places most divers would avoid.

You can make a difference!

When you began diving you learned a new set of skills to override your instincts and better take care of yourself under water. Now we are asking you to expand those skills and your awareness to protect the environment. If you choose to enlist in the war against invasive exotic aquatic plants, prepare yourself for tedious diving in poor conditions. Be careful

not to let your concern drive you beyond your level of training and experience. But do let passion motivate you to harvest effectively and to campaign to stop the spread of these insidious plants.

Course Purpose:

This course is designed to develop knowledge and skills needed to help combat variable milfoil in New Hampshire. You will learn about control methods and how to identify, document and safely and effectively hand harvest and dispose of this and possibly other insidious weeds.

Course Fees: This course is free for tenders (non-diving volunteers) and these participants will learn how to provide boat or surface support for divers. The fee is \$149 for certified divers interested in the Weed Control Diver Certification.

Dives and field training for tenders will be arranged at the class.

Prerequisites for Divers:

- Certification as an Open Water Diver
- 15 years of age or older
- 10+ logged dives in low to zero visibility
- Be prepared to demonstrate good buoyancy control and comfort in low visibility
- PADI medical form signed by your physician if any questions on form are answered yes.

Training Requirements: Divers and Tenders

- Classroom: 5 – 6 hours (DES, Concord, NH)
- Dives: 4 – 8 hours (to be arranged)



You must be a certified diver and have DES approval to harvest exotic aquatic plants:

Divers who attempt harvesting in New Hampshire without this certification or a Department of Environmental Services' Wetlands Permit are subject to fines of up to \$2,000 per violation (i.e., per site and per day). Additionally, if a diver that does not have a certification through this course conducts exotic plant removal practices without a permit from the Wetlands Bureau, it could be viewed as a felony per RSA 481-A:14.

To register and for specific course

dates: Contact Ted Aldrich at (603) 446-3375 or weedcontroldiver@gmail.com. NH LAKES will post the 2010 course dates at www.nhlakes.org as soon as they are announced.

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2010 Legislative Update

The 2010 legislative session kicked off in early January. NH LAKES introduced four bills to the legislature to help better protect New Hampshire's lakes and ponds.

Restricting phosphorus in residential lawn fertilizer (House Bill 1299)

- This bill will prohibit the sale and distribution of residential lawn fertilizer containing phosphorus in New Hampshire.
- Phosphorus has a significant detrimental impact to lakes and rivers, often acting as a fertilizer for aquatic vegetation, leading to overabundant plant and algal growth.
- Most New Hampshire soils do not need phosphorus fertilizer, and phosphorus-free lawn fertilizers are already available through several manufacturers.
- If successful, New Hampshire would join Minnesota as one of only two states in the country to legislate the removal of phosphorus from residential lawn fertilizer to protect water quality.

Creation of a septic system commission (House Bill 1298)

- This bill would establish a commission to review all of the issues relating to septic systems in New Hampshire, including new technology that would provide smaller, more efficient alternatives.

- HB 1298 is currently in the New Hampshire House of Representatives in the Resources, Recreation & Development Committee.

Improve access to funding for exotic aquatic species prevention programs (like the Lake Host™ Program)

- This bill would change language in the statute to provide for the cost associated with the administration of the prevention granting program, and revise language to ensure that a minimum of three-quarters of the funds go toward prevention grants (recognizing that a total of \$4 for every boat registration goes toward prevention now—up from \$3 previously).
- This bill is currently in the New Hampshire Senate.

Establish purchasing alliances for affordable insurance

- This bill would allow nonprofits and small businesses to form purchasing alliances to bring down costs associated with health insurance.
- Nonprofits provide many of the services to New Hampshire citizens, yet the rising costs associated with health insurance have been a burden that is preventing some organizations from fulfilling their mission.
- This bill will help alleviate those costs by

establishing more affordable insurance premiums.

- This bill is currently before the New Hampshire Senate.

For more information

If you have any questions regarding these bills, or if you would like to become a NH LAKES legislative volunteer to help pass these important initiatives, please contact Jared Teutsch, NH LAKES President and Policy Advocate at jteutsch@nhlakes.org or (603) 226-0299.

Membership Matters

New Members – September 22 through December 15, 2009

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*Looking across Lake Winnepesaukee towards a snow covered Mt. Washington.
(Photo courtesy of www.weirsonline.com.)*

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Bundle Up and Have Fun at IceFest!



There's a lot to enjoy on New Hampshire's frozen lakes and ponds!
(Photo courtesy of www.cobbettspond.org.)

Enjoy the outdoors and what winter has to offer on New Hampshire's lakes by joining NH LAKES on Cobbetts Pond in Windham on Saturday, February 6, at the first annual IceFest! This family-fun event, hosted by NH LAKES in cooperation with the Cobbetts Pond Improvement Association and the Castleton Banquet & Conference Center, will feature a chili cook-off, ice skating and ice hockey, ice fishing and ice safety demonstrations, and possibly even ice mini-golf or ice bowling. And, off course, lots of hot chocolate will accompany the festivities. The event, which begins at 11 a.m., will continue until 3:00 p.m., or until everyone has had too much fun—whichever comes sooner! Parking and restrooms will be available at the Castleton Banquet & Conference Center at 92 Indian Rock Road, Windham. (Please note that snowmobile access to the pond is not available at the Castleton grounds.) **Be sure to check the NH LAKES events calendar at www.nhlakes.org/calendar.htm as February 6 approaches for more information! Hope to see you, your families, and friends there!**

Upcoming Events

- **February 6, 2010:** First Annual NH LAKES IceFest, Castleton on Cobbetts Pond, Windham. 11 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **June 25, 2010:** NH LAKES' Lakes Congress, Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, Holderness.
- **July 8, 2010:** Third Annual NH LAKES LakeFest, Meredith.

For information, contact NH LAKES at info@nhlakes.org or (603) 226-0299.