



Weed Watchin'

An Annual Newsletter for Volunteer Weed Watchers



Published by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Summer 2009



World of Weeds Updates

Amy P. Smagula, DES Exotic Species Program Coordinator

Hello Weed Watchers, Lake Hosts, and others interested in exotic aquatic plants. We are back on track with a newsletter for 2009. Unfortunately last year we were unable to produce a newsletter due to some staffing changes. As many of you know, Ken Warren retired in June 2008, and I have since taken over the elements of the Exotic Species Program that he used to handle, namely the grant program for exotic aquatic plant control projects, and responding to complaints about exotic plants. Now that I have a system in place for integrating these program elements, we can get back to getting the newsletter out to you for program and state updates. Here are a number of updates across a variety of categories:

Grant Funds - For the 2009 season DES had approximately \$60,000 to award for control projects. To spread the money further, the usual 50 percent match grants were reduced down to only 30 percent grants. A total of 13 grants were awarded to groups around the state for exotic plant control projects this summer, out of a total of 33 requests.

Program Funding- As you can see from the grant fund summary above, funds are in high demand but in low supply. During the past winter season the Exotic Species Program worked with the Milfoil Study Committee to draft legislation to seek to increase funding to the program. The program is funded solely from boat registration fees, so an increase to these fees was sought in 2009 legislation. Luckily the legislation passed, which means an estimated additional \$150,000 in funds is expected annually to allow for more control practices to be conducted. An additional \$100,000 is also expected to expand our prevention grant program.

Infestations: There are a total of 83 infestations on 72 waterbodies in New Hampshire, with variable milfoil still taking the lead for most number of waterbodies infested. So far in 2009 there have been no new infestations of exotic aquatic plants detected, but it's early yet, and milfoils and other exotic plants can grow well into the fall, so Weed Watcher efforts should continue as late in the fall as possible.

While we often focus on invasive aquatic plants, we still need to remember that there are pesky animal species out there as well.

Unfortunately, Massachusetts has realized this with the identification of the zebra mussel in that state. The invasive mussel was found in the western part of the state in a lake in the Berkshires. Biologists in Massachusetts are scrambling to assess the situation and quarantine that lake and other lakes nearby. New Hampshire has not yet seen a zebra mussel infestation, but we're nearly surrounded, with infestations in New York, Connecticut, Vermont, and now Massachusetts. More information on the zebra mussel can be found on the DES website at www.des.nh.gov.

Many more updates and articles are included in this edition of Weed Watchin'. If there is something special you'd like to see in future editions, please let us know.

Inside

Native Plant Focus	2
Tools of the Trade	3
Exotic Plant Alert I	4
Exotic Plant Alert II	5
Plant Grants	6
New Technologies	7
Local Lake Story	9



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Native Plant Focus

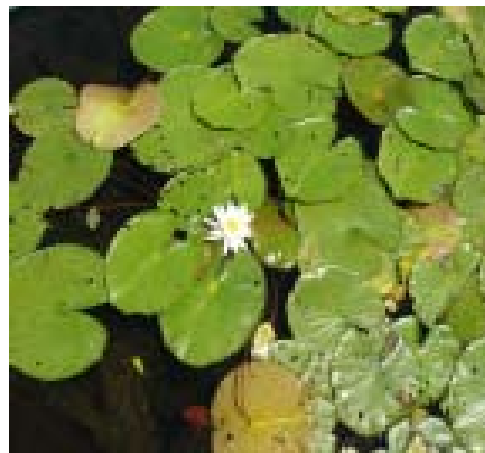
Water-lilies

By Deidra Sargent, DES Exotic Species Program Assistant

Water-lilies can be found in many lakes and ponds in New Hampshire. The two that are most commonly found here are the white water-lily (*Nymphaea odorata*) and the yellow water-lily (*Nuphar variegata*). The white water-lily has a white flower with a yellow center, and its floating leaves are rounded and have a sharp v-notch where the stem attaches (they look like PacMan.). The yellow water-lily has an emergent all-yellow flower and very large oval leaves with a rounded base, and it is often the first flower to emerge on lakes in New Hampshire in the spring. Though you may occasionally come across a pink water lily in the state, they are not native, and were likely planted by someone (though this is not encouraged). Water-lilies are found growing near the shore in relatively shallow water (3-12 foot depths). The root of a water-lily is a tuber that is buried in sediments of the lake or pond.



Water-lilies are more than pretty flowers to enhance a lake or pond's appearance; they have ecological benefits too. The tubers of the water-lilies are a favorite snack of moose, and waterfowl and raccoons also use the plant as a source of food. The broad leaves of the water lilies can shade the water column during hot summer days, acting like an umbrella, and they can also help to slow down waves generated by wind or boat activity because they are anchored to the bottom and act as an energy diffuser for the waves.



Yellow (top right) and white (above) water-lilies. Photos by Amy P. Smagula, DES.

Water-lilies and their tubers can sometimes form floating islands, particularly in lakes where there are fluctuating water levels. During drawdown ice can get into the sediment and push the tubers up and out of the muck. The tubers and associated stems, leaves, and often peaty material can float around in large masses and then anchor in shallower water elsewhere in the waterbody, sometimes forming reef-like growths around the shore. Emergent plants can then grow on these islands or reefs. The roots of these emergent plants hold the mat together even more, adding to its size.

Tools of the Trade

Find It? Mark It.

You are out weed watching, and the inevitable happens – you think you have found an exotic plant. The best immediate thing to do is throw over a marker buoy to mark that exact spot. Particularly in larger lakes, it is very difficult to backtrack to the precise spot where that new stem of milfoil is hiding. Being prepared while Weed Watching is critical to the success of early invasive detection.

Marker buoys do not need to be fancy or expensive – they can be made from common items found around your home. Below are some materials and instructions that work well for assembling your buoys.

- **Float:** Buoy, empty (and clean) detergent bottle, soda bottle, one-gallon jug (with a good seal), small section of foam swimming noodle (avoid styrofoam)
- **Weight:** Brick, cinderblock, old dumbbells, or small anchors
- **Connecting Line:** Small rope, light chain
- **Fasteners:** Mini padlocks, zip ties, carabineers, hose clamps.

Using your selected connective line, connect one end to the float – knotting it if a rope, or fastening it if a chain. Connect the other end to the weight.



Recommendations:

- Make the connecting line about 10-12 feet long.
 - Use a weight that is sufficient enough to hold buoy in place.
 - Make sure floats are large and colorful enough to be seen so they can be found and not be a navigation hazard.
- Indicate on the float what it is being used for. Write “Weed Watcher Marker,” “Plant Marker,” “Exotic Plant” or something similar. It may be wise to write “Do not Disturb” or “Do not Remove,” as well.
 - Also remember to collect a specimen and *report the finding to DES immediately.*

Purple Bladderwort in New Hampshire's Lakes

Purple bladderwort (*Utricularia purpurea*) is commonly found in New Hampshire's waterbodies in varying densities. Like other bladderworts, purple bladderwort is carnivorous. The plant has between five and seven 'bladder' covered leaves that whorl around the brownish-green stem (the bladders are actually little stomach-like structures). The flowers, which are lavender, have two oddly shaped petals with a yellow spot on the bottom petal. The flowers stand above the surface of the water, with one plant producing one to four flowers. Purple bladderwort flowers throughout the summer.



Bladderwort is not a rooted plant, so it tends to drift around and form large floating mats that occasionally wash up on shoreline areas or get wrapped around propellers or paddles. Unfortunately it seems to be on the rise in New Hampshire, and though it is a native, it still can tend to be a nuisance. Just scoop it out and compost it if it washes up on shore.

EXOTIC PLANT ALERT - I

Glossostigma (*Glossostigma diandra*)

By Deidra Sargent, DES Exotic Species Program Assistant, modified from a Powerpoint presentation by Robert Capers, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

There is a new plant in New England that could be joining the ranks with milfoil and fanwort. *Glossostigma diandra* is another exotic to look out for. *G. diandra* is a very small aquatic plant that normally grows 2-4 cm tall. It is most commonly found growing as a submerged plant, but it can also grow on land. The plant grows along a rhizome. It produces its fruits when the small flowers, which grow along every node of the rhizome, self-fertilize. On average only about 40 percent of the flowers produce mature fruit. Each mature fruit will have about 40 seeds. When the plant grows under water, it is a perennial and will continue to grow through the winter. When it is growing terrestrially, it is an annual and will die back during the cold weather. The leaves and the internodes are shorter when the plant is growing on land. *G. diandra* is most often found in water that has high clarity and low, pH, alkalinity, conductivity and phosphorus. In other words, it likes growing in oligotrophic, or pristine lakes.

Right now *G. diandra* is found in 19 waterbodies, in four states, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and



Rhode Island. *G. diandra* was first discovered in Connecticut in 1992, in 2002 it had jumped to seven more waterbodies and by 2005 the total number of locations

was 19. The reason that this plant is a problem is because it will form thick, dense carpets on the bottom of



lakes and ponds.

When *G. diandra* is growing in water there will be a range of 10,000 to 25,000 plants per square meter. In the right growing conditions these plants can be found growing in densities of 100,000 plants per square meter. The mats it forms will not grow tall, but they do outcompete native plants for growing space. The seeds of the plant are small and can be easily picked up with mud by waterfowl. Seed dispersal from ducks and geese is definitely one way that this plant can be spread, but the most likely way that it will be introduced to new areas is through inappropriate disposal by aquarium owners. *G. diandra* is a very popular aquatic plant because of its ability to form mats, so there is a good possibility that new introductions will be from aquariums.

Although *G. diandra* will not be clogging any boat props, it still has invasive characteristics that will make it difficult for native plants to find places to grow. If you think you see this plant in your lake or pond, please collect a sample and send it to DES. Remember, early detection is the key to stopping invasive plants. Also remember to dispose of any aquarium plants properly, by throwing them in the trash.

EXOTIC PLANT ALERT - II

Brittle Water naiad (*Najas minor*)

Najas minor, or water naiad, is an invasive aquatic plant that was originally native to Europe, North Africa and Japan. The plant was introduced to the United States in the 1930s. It is thought that the plant was introduced by someone dumping an aquarium that contained the plant.

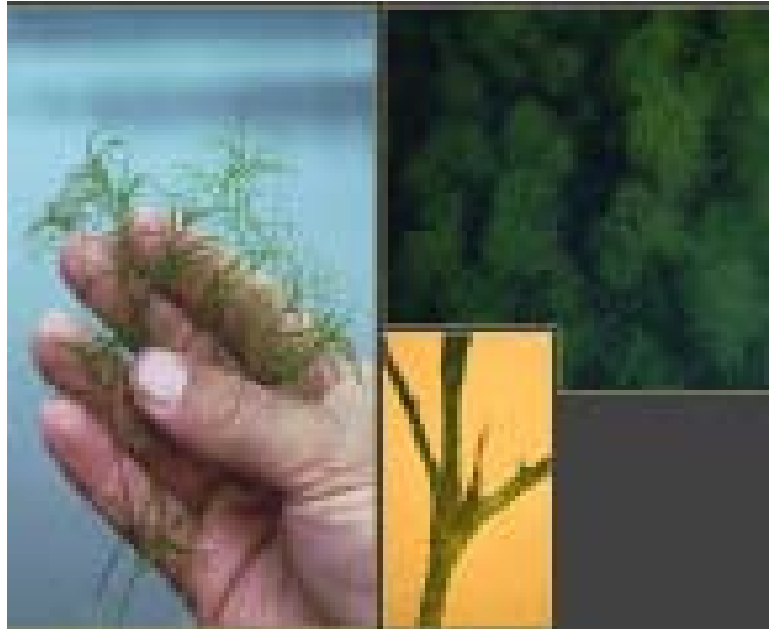
Water naiad has narrow serrated leaves that are about an inch long and have a distinctive backward curl. The plant is highly branched and is very brittle, so it is easily broken into small pieces. Look for somewhat broader leaves and serrated edges when trying to distinguish between the invasive water naiad species and the native species. As of 2009, this water naiad species can be found in Glen Lake in Goffstown, Moultonboro Bay in Moultonboro, and in the Connecticut River.

Once in a waterbody the plant can rapidly spread by both seeds and fragmentation. *N. minor* creates many problems for the waterbodies that it infests. Once water naiad is established it can form low-growing shub-like monocultures across the bottom, creating adverse conditions for fish and other native plant life, primarily by altering the habitat structure and potentially altering predator-prey interactions due to high plant densities.

Many control methods have been used on *N. minor* in different parts of the country. These methods include harvesting, benthic barriers and herbicides. All have had some success, but harvesting can produce many fragments that can spread and infest new parts of a water body. Prevention and early detection is key.

This plant is best detected early so that hand-removal or benthic barrier placement can take place when plants are small and localized, and before seed formation.

Please report any suspected locations of this plant to DES immediately so that biologists can assess the site to determine if control or containment activities are feasible given the distribution of the plant.



Photos of *Najas minor* provided by Ann Bove of Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. Note recurved leaves and teeth or spines on leaves. Fruit is in axil of leaf.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

If you are interested in participating in the Volunteer Weed Watcher Program, or if you would like a refresher training session, please contact Amy Smagula at (603) 271-2248 or amy.smagula@des.nh.gov. If you see anything even remotely suspicious, collect a representative sample of the plant (preferably with seeds or flowers), wrap it in a moist paper towel, seal it in a plastic baggie, and deliver or send it to: Amy P. Smagula, NH DES, 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95Concord, NH 03302-0095.

Alternatively, you can send a digital image of the plant as an attachment via e-mail to Amy at amy.smagula@des.nh.gov.

Are You Aware of the New Procedures and Timelines for Exotic Plant Control Grants?

By Amy P. Smagula

A Changing of the Guard

Many of you have worked with Ken Warren over the years to coordinate control of exotic aquatic plants. The summer of 2008 was a transitional year as I began taking over these program elements as Ken was preparing for his retirement. Ken is now retired as of July 31, 2008, and I will be the primary contact for exotic aquatic plant management grants, management plan preparation, and all exotic aquatic plant questions. There are some important deadlines and timelines that need to be followed in order to be considered for funding for projects. The following information details what you need to know.

Applying for Grant Funds

All of the grant information is posted on the DES website so it is easy to find. The link to exotic plant control grants is <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/exoticspecies/categories/grants.htm>, and the specific link for the application for funds is at http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/exoticspecies/documents/control_grant_app_packet.pdf. Everything you need for funding requests can be found online. Deadlines are as follows:

- **Summer Months** – If you notice an over-abundance of exotic aquatic plants notify Amy Smagula immediately so that plans for mapping can begin (you will need a map to obtain bids for control for the following year)
- **September 15 of each year** – Completed application form for fund request submitted to DES
- **October 15 of each year** – Bids/quotes due to DES for review (based on DES maps of infestation)
- **November 30 of each year** – Announcement of Grant Recipients

Long-Term Management Plans

I am in the process of writing Long-Term Management Plans for each waterbody that is infested. Many of you that live on infested waterbodies already have a plan in place. Each of the completed plans is online for viewing at www.des.nh.gov.

If you do not already have a Long-Term Management Plan for your waterbody and you are applying for funding, please complete the full application as it appears online, including information about numbers of houses, boats, docks, swim platforms, etc. This information will help us to complete the management plan. For an example on what other lakes submitted, in terms of format, for this information, examples have been posted online at www.des.nh.gov. If you have questions relative to completing this information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

If you already have a Long-Term Management Plan for your waterbody and you are re-applying for funding for a project, you do not need to fill out the complete application as it appears online. Simply send me a letter indicating that you would like to proceed with Year 2 (or 3, or 4) action items from your management plan, and that you would like state funding assistance for the projects. Please also complete pages 3-5 of the grant application package and mail it with the cover letter.

Continuous Funding for Projects

Unfortunately, as mentioned in the opening article of this newsletter, funding for control practices is still somewhat tight. As a result, continuous funding for projects is not likely available, though Long-Term Management Plans are written for activities to take place each year for several years. In some cases, DES may be able to provide funding for more than one year; in other circumstances local funds from the association, municipality, or other sources will be needed to carry out a project.

DES's Suction Harvester Goes to Work on Milfoil

By Scott Ashley, Jody Connor, and Amy Smagula, DES Limnologists

For the past two years, limnologists with the DES Biology Section, in cooperation with several individuals including divers and fabrication specialists, have developed a diver-assisted suction harvester device to assist with managing exotic aquatic plant growth in New Hampshire's waterbodies.

Exotic aquatic plant managers understand the importance of the integrated approach to provide long-term and more effective control of exotic plant infestations. A combination of scaled approaches is the proven method to manage exotic plants. The D.A.S.H. unit is one more tool available for the control of exotic plants in New Hampshire, and like any tool, there is a time and a place that is best for its use, and it is not a new solution to the exotic plant problem. It is up to the lake biologists to recommend appropriate strategies to control each infestation.

What It Is

The D.A.S.H. is essentially an aquatic vacuum cleaner used by divers to remove hand-pulled exotic plants and their roots from bottom sediments. This device is operated by specially licensed divers that hold the Weed Control Diver (WCD) certification through the Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI). The suction harvester is best suited to physically manage small to moderately sized infestations. However, a suction harvester has been working in Smith Cove, Winnepesaukee, a large infested area, for the past two summers, and is making excellent progress at controlling the variable milfoil growth in the cove.

The unit is constructed on a floating platform, such as a pontoon boat, barge, or even a swim platform mounted on pontoons. The deck of the platform is modified

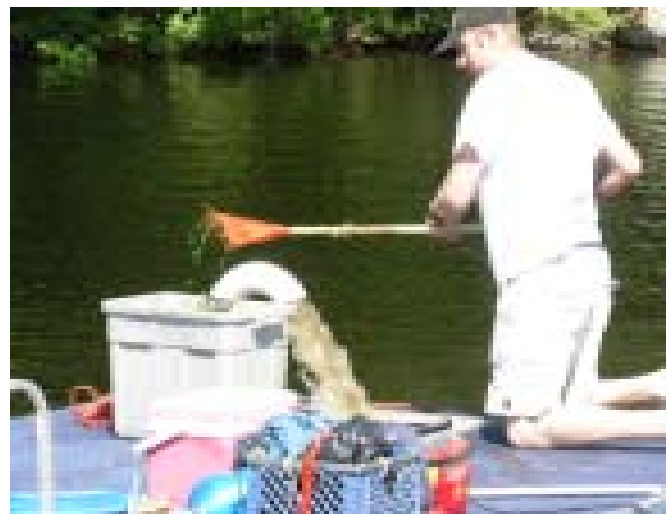
by cutting a 2' x 3' rectangle in the floor.

The floor hole is lined with a plant collection net that retains any plants and roots that are suctioned from the bottom sediments. Mounted on the deck is a vortex pump to draw plants pulled by the diver. A special low-density, large-diameter hose connected to the pump extends into the water from the vessel is used by the divers to suction the bottom plants.

A certified diver works to systematically hand-remove the exotic plant by the roots and then feeds the plant and the roots up the hose. The plants, water, and a small amount of sediment are discharged into the net-lined cut-out in the platform. The water filters through the net fabric while the plants remain in the net.

The deckhand sorts through the

Continued on next page



At left, divers and the surface tender prepare to start harvesting with the D.A.S.H. unit. At right, the surface tender clears the catchment net and transfers milfoil plants to a container for measurement and subsequent disposal.

New Technologies, cont.

DES's Suction Harvester

Continued from previous page

net contents to remove and set free any mussels or other aquatic life, then scoops the plants into a 20-gallon bucket or container to measure actual exotic plants and root volumes removed from the system. The material is then bagged for disposal in a landfill or compost site that is located a distance from a surface waterbody. During the summer of 2008 the harvester operated by DES pulled over 3,000 gallons of milfoil.

What It Is Not.

For maximum cost effectiveness, the D.A.S.H. is best used for small to moderately sized infestations. It is not a technique that can be cost effective when used in a large areas of exotic aquatic plant infestation. The most cost effective method for large area infestations is the use of permitted herbicides by licensed applicators. Also, D.A.S.H. is not intended for use in controlling native aquatic plants.

How Many Units Are There?

DES currently has one unit and available parts to construct one



other unit. Our limited staff time allows the unit to be effectively used only one to two days per week during the June to October time period. DES is working with the Milfoil Legislative Working Committee to hopefully increase program funds to hire seasonal divers to work full-time operating the DES unit and to expand our suction harvester fleet.

There are also three or more privately owned units throughout New Hampshire and neighboring Maine. Each of the operators of these devices is certified through the New Hampshire WCD program so that their techniques have been validated and approved by DES biologists. These private contractors notify DES if they have been solicited to perform exotic plant control activities in New Hampshire waterbodies. They are required under their WCD certification to provide a pre and post dive summary of their work so that DES can keep track of progress made in managing exotic aquatic plants throughout the state.

We plan to continue to modify and expand this program each year so that it becomes a standard component within our multi-tiered approach at controlling exotic aquatic plants.

Certified Weed Control Divers with D.A.S.H. units

Diver Services

Owner: Mark Richardson

mrmilfoil@hotmail.com

Old Belmont Road

Belmont, NH

603-527-0730

New England Milfoil

Owner: Cliff Cabral

391 Center Conway Road

Brownfield, ME 04010

603-387-2425

www.NewEnglandMilfoil.com

New England Environmental Diving Services

Brett Durham, Principal Consultant

brett@needsdiving.com

PO Box 4

Plymouth, NH 03264

603-998-4988

www.needsdiving.com

Weed Watchers in Action

Lake Sunapee's Milfoil Story

By Robert Wood, Associate Director of the Lake Sunapee Protective Association

In the late 1990s, when awareness of aquatic invasives as a real threat to lakes was rapidly expanding, the then Vice President of the Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA) Board of Directors, Walt Goddard, told the board and staff that “we need to be prepared for this.” So we learned what we could, we energized our volunteer Weed Watch team and we made some plans. In addition to strengthening our educational and prevention efforts, we also identified “hot spots” – areas where we thought invasives would be most likely to establish. We identified 11 areas based on proximity to public boat access, prevailing winds and what was known about lake currents, sediment conditions and other factors.

We increased monitoring in these areas. In the summer of 2001 LSPA learned that the invasive aquatic plant variable milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*), had come to Lake Sunapee. Since then LSPA has been successful in limiting the growth and containing the spread of the invasive.

Variable milfoil was identified in the northwest corner of Lake Sunapee in one of our previously identified “hot spots.” The plant was seen in a few locations in the George’s Mills area adjacent to the primary surface flow (Otter Pond Brook) into Lake Sunapee. It was brought to the attention LSPA by a volunteer Weed Watcher and a part-time LSPA staff person. [Note: Milfoil (species not noted) was identified in the early 1990s at this site by Dick Flanders, a former LSPA board member, retired Department Environmental Services program director and keen observer of plant life.]

The DES Limnology Center confirmed the identification and provided initial guidance, materials, and diver assistance to cover the invasive with benthic barrier, a fine-meshed fiberglass/plastic screening material that controls plant growth while allowing gases released by decomposition in the sediments to escape. The largest patch of milfoil was approximately 20 feet by 20 feet, in about nine feet of water, and approximately 6 feet tall. There were several smaller milfoil patches and



A look out over Georges Mill on Lake Sunapee. This portion of the lake once supported two large patches of variable milfoil growth. If it wasn't for the keen eye of Weed Watchers, they wouldn't be milfoil free today. Photograph courtesy of Andrea LaMoreaux.

numerous scattered plants. The larger patches of milfoil were covered with barrier while other divers, along with LSPA staff and volunteers, also hand-pulled milfoil (with roots) from the sediment.

In the first summer, approximately 1,500 square feet of barrier was installed. The mats were originally weighted with rebar segments attached to the barrier perimeter. For the small pieces of barrier that we have installed since 2001, we prefer to use flat or “flattish” rocks. In shallower waters where the barrier may be visible, the rocks do not draw attention the way the rebar does, particularly when the rebar turns a rusty red-orange. And from a safety perspective, rebar was not a good choice when barrier placements were near swim areas.

Milfoil and other plants have been observed growing on top of the barrier. Plant fragments can land on the barrier and send thread-like roots through the screening material. Also, milfoil and some natives grow through from the sediments, though the plant stems are thread-like and weak where they pass through the barrier. These plants do seem to survive, though they are not vigorous. Also, after some sediment has been deposited on top of the barrier, all plants are more likely to establish there. Within months of barrier placement,

Weed Watchers in Action

Lake Sunapee's Milfoil Story

Continued from previous page

enough sediment and fine organic particulates had been deposited on the barrier that much of it was not readily visible. Now, seven years later, little if any of the original barrier is visible. Many native plants are now growing on top of the barrier – a good thing because native plants will help limit the establishment of invasives.



Weed Watchers on Lake Sunapee keep a close eye on bottom growth. Photos courtesy of Midge Eliassen, LSPA.

We now have approximately 3,000 square feet of barrier installed. Relative to other lakes invasive problems, this is not a large area. But LSPA staff (in addition to our volunteer Weed Watchers) regularly monitors a much larger area, and particularly areas adjacent to known established invasives and those down-current and down-wind.

We have recently discovered some suspicious milfoil in Sunapee Harbor and are now doing additional monitoring there. Because it can be difficult to distinguish between milfoil species, we are awaiting a confirmed

identification on the Harbor specimens. Not surprisingly, both the George's Mills and Sunapee Harbor sites are adjacent to public boat launches, boat/trailer transport being a major mechanism for the spread of invasives.

LSPA had Launch Monitors (precursor to the present day Lake Host program) starting in 2000 at public boat ramps. The Lake Host program at Sunapee has averaged a couple of "saves" per year. In addition to this preventative and educational effort, LSPA coordinates over 100 volunteer Weed Watchers. This program covers nearly all of the entire 30 miles of shoreline. For areas of shoreline (littoral area) not monitored by volunteer Weed Watchers, LSPA staff fills in. LSPA also hosts a yearly Weed Watch refresher, keeping Sunapee's Weed Watchers and those from surrounding lakes and ponds updated on their plant identification skills and the latest invasive news.

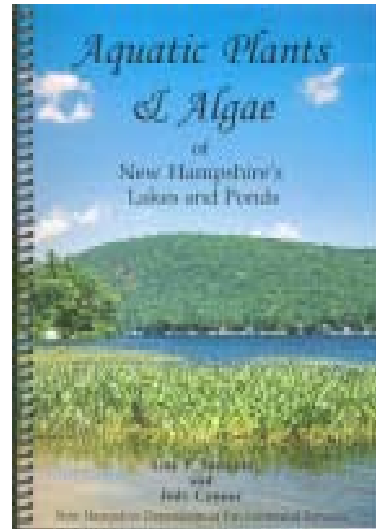
The DES Limnology Center and Exotic Species Program provide the training. There are several species of milfoil in Lake Sunapee but nearly all of our native milfoil is *Myriophyllum humile*. In most cases, *M. humile* is relatively easy to distinguish from *M. heterophyllum* because of color differences. Much of the new or younger growth of *M. humile* in Sunapee has a pinkish or pale reddish tint. The early growth of other native milfoils is not as easy to distinguish from variable milfoil (*M. heterophyllum*). In our experience, the characteristics of any (one) species of aquatic plant (color, vigor, etc.) varies from lake to lake and from site to site. The variance in these characteristics is determined by many environmental factors – sediment conditions, light availability, etc. It is important to recognize these sometimes very subtle differences in milfoil (or other invasives) in your lake or pond. All in all, the barrier has worked well but more importantly, the main reason we feel that we have contained invasive milfoil is because we detected it early and have systematically monitored and hand-pulled it regularly.

Plant Identification Resources Still Available

Additional copies of this great resource for plant identification are still available. These plant identification books have been flying off the shelves and have been used by a great number of Weed Watchers and lake residents, among others.

This 100-page, full color booklet covers many of the common aquatic plants and algae that are encountered in our lakes and ponds throughout New Hampshire and the Northeast. The books are \$5 each, which covers the cost of printing.

To place your order, please call or e-mail Amy Smagula at (603) 271-2248 or asmagula@des.nh.gov with the quantities you would like. Checks should be made payable to “Treasurer, State of New Hampshire,” and mailed to NHDES, c/o Amy Smagula, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095.



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