



News Release

From the Maine Department of Environmental Protection
17 State House Station, Augusta ME 04333-0017

State Biologists Confirm Hydrilla Infestation in Damariscotta Lake

DEP staff deploying containment nets today as Lake volunteers monitor invasion's scope

For Immediate Release:
September 24, 2009

Contacts: Paul Gregory 287-6961
Donna Gormley 592-2032

(AUGUSTA)—Dick Butterfield, a Jefferson volunteer for the Damariscotta Lake Watershed Association (DLWA), took a day-long workshop last spring on how to identify invasive aquatic plants. This week that course and Butterfield's keen eyes may save Damariscotta Lake from the most aggressive invasive aquatic plant in North America--hydrilla (*hydrilla verticillata*).

Biologists from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program (VLMP) confirmed Butterfield's September 21 discovery in a 0.3-acre cove on the lake's west shore. Able to grow an inch a day and without predators, hydrilla overtakes native lake habitats, shading and outcompeting ecologically valuable plants. Dense infestations can alter water chemistry and oxygen levels.

A preliminary survey on September 23rd suggests the infestation is limited to within and just outside the mouth of the small cove.

"Every invasive species infestation, no matter how aggressive, starts small," says Paul Gregory, an environmental Specialist for the DEP. "Early detection by Mr. Butterfield gives us the upper hand, enabling rapid deployment of trained personnel, equipment and other resources to contain this hydrilla population. That's our immediate objective."

DEP biologists will screen off the cove's mouth today to prevent hydrilla fragments, and thereby potential new infestations, from migrating into greater Damariscotta Lake. DLWA volunteers like Butterfield who are trained in plant identification and lake survey methods will begin monitoring nearby coves to determine the scope of hydrilla in the Lake.

Plant identifications training is provided by VLMP's Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants under contract with the DEP.

Only one other water body in the state, Pickerel Pond in Limerick, is infested with hydrilla. In total, 31 out of Maine's 5,700 ponds and lakes contain an invasive aquatic plant species.

Efforts to prevent, detect and manage aquatic invasive plants are made possible by boater participation in the Maine Lake and River Protection Sticker program.

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