

Aquatic Hitchhikers: A Worry For Highland Lake

By Beth Lind
Highland Lake Protective Assoc.

Keeping Highland Lake free of invasive aquatic plants is really important to Andover. "Aquatic hitchhikers," as described in the New Hampshire Fish and Game article on this page, could threaten our ability to swim and boat in the lake if they were to take hold.

To the best of our knowledge, Highland Lake does not have any invasive weeds yet, but we must keep our guard up. The Highland Lake Protective Association (HPLA) has been aware of

this threat for some time, and we are very concerned about it.

We are particularly worried about variable milfoil, which was discovered in Lake Sunapee in 2001. Any boat that has been in an infested lake can bring the invasive weeds to Highland Lake, even if just a small piece is caught on a boat trailer.

As mentioned in the NHF&G article that follows, it takes just a tiny section of a plant to infect a lake, and once an infestation starts, it is incredibly difficult and very expensive to fight the infestation.

HPLA participates in one of the state's monitoring programs: Weed Watchers. Amy Smagula came out to give us a training session, and we are trying to set up a regular schedule of Weed Watchers to inspect the plants in the lake and watch out for anything that looks suspicious.

HPLA is hoping to apply to participate in the Lake Host program next summer, but it will take a lot of volunteer help and much of HPLA's budget to get that up and running.

We have posted signs about "aquatic hitchhikers" at the boat launch on Channel Road, but everyone who uses Highland Lake can play a very important role in preventing an infestation.

NHF&G Urges Public To Help Fight Aquatic Hitchhikers

By New Hampshire Fish & Game

The aliens are invading! As you're out enjoying recreation on and near New Hampshire's beautiful waters this summer, do your part to keep "aquatic hitchhikers" like variable milfoil from spreading to and threatening the quality of our lakes, rivers and ponds. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHF&G) and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) urge you to check your equipment for milfoil and other nuisance species before you launch. Aquatic nuisance species can easily be transported on boats, motors, trailers, fishing equipment, bait buckets, diving gear, and other recreational equipment.

"Aquatic hitchhikers" can quickly take over lakes and ponds, choking waterways with explosive growth, fouling intake and discharge structures, harming native plants and animals, and possibly lowering lakefront property values. Once established in a waterbody, aquatic nuisance species are nearly impossible to eradicate.

New Hampshire already has nine different species of exotic aquatic plants in its waterways, and others, like hydrilla, lurk near our borders. In all, 68 New Hampshire lakes, ponds and rivers are infested to date, according to Amy Smagula, DES's Exotic Species Program Coordinator, who tracks the spread of exotic plants around the Granite State.

"Variable milfoil continues to be the number one problem in New Hampshire's waterbodies," says Smagula. She goes on to warn that other species, like fanwort and water chestnut, are also on the move. Lakes, ponds, and flowing waters of rivers and streams are also subject to colonization by these species. "Even just a small piece of the plant, nothing more than two to three inches in length, is enough to cause a new infestation," says Smagula. "Still, good old-fashioned visual inspection and hand-removal of the plants is enough to prevent a problem."

Some 500 "Lake Host" volunteers

are stationed at 82 boat launches at more than 60 New Hampshire lakes to provide a courtesy inspection and educate boaters on how to prevent the spread of exotic species. Working through the New Hampshire Lakes Association, under a grant from DES, these volunteers last year inspected more than 34,500 boats being launched into state waters. The Lake Host program was credited with 54 "saves" in 2006, and already with 6 saves this year.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!

Help protect New Hampshire waters by following these guidelines for preventing the spread of exotic weeds and other aquatic nuisance species:

- **Look** for warning signs for aquatic nuisance species near boat launch sites.
- **Hand-remove** all materials (plant or animal) from equipment. Don't throw the material back into the water! Dispose of it far away from the water. Pay special attention to the bunks or rollers where the boat is seated on the trailer.
- **Wash and dry** all equipment before reuse. Hose off the boat, diving gear, or trailer.
- **Drain and flush** the engine cooling system and live wells of your boat, your bait buckets, and the buoyancy control device from diving equipment that's been in contact with an infested waterbody (to protect against the spread of zebra mussels).

For a list of exotic aquatic plants that are prohibited within New Hampshire, visit the DES Exotic Species website at DES.State.NH.us/wmb/exoticspecies.

For more information on what you can do to help prevent the spread of invasive aquatic plants and animals, visit ProtectYourWaters.net/nh. You'll find the latest news about this problem, detailed procedures to prevent the transport of nuisance species, impacts caused by these species, facts about some of the more common "hitchhikers," and resources and ideas for you or your club to get involved with prevention efforts.

Highland Lake Protective Association

SUMMER SCHEDULE

4th of July Events

Tuesday, July 3, 9 PM
Flare lighting around the lake

Wednesday, July 4, 4 PM
Boat parade around the lake

Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 7, 9:30 AM
East Andover Fire House

Ice Cream Social

Saturday, July 7, 7 PM
East Andover Fire House

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