



Milfoil Update 2008

July

Traffic is slow, but awareness is high

Tate Tibbetts needs just one word to describe his first season as a courtesy boat inspector at Thompson Lake Marina in Oxford: "Awesome."

Tate, 16, enjoys interacting with boaters, especially fishermen, because they joke a lot. Everybody seems familiar with the inspection program, he said, and boaters leaving Thompson Lake, which is infested with variable leaf milfoil, are especially careful to check their boats.

"Pulling out they do it better than pulling in," Tate said.

His one wish is for more boats. The first weekend in June, he saw only five. He has his cell phone, I-Pod and school work to keep him busy, but said, "I'd like to be seeing more, rather than less boats."

This year courtesy boat inspectors can be found on 79 lakes and one river in Maine.

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Tate Tibbetts, Thompson Lake



ON THE FRONT LINE in Western Maine's Lakes Region: Clockwise from top left, courtesy boat inspectors Gus Espeignette (and his dog, Max); Melissa Panter and Christian Oren; Elaine Cummings; Gary Garcelon; Kate Baldwin, and Jackie and Jim Fitzgerald.



For upcoming events, see Page 4. What's happening at your lake?
If you have an event, anecdote or photo to share, please email roberta@lemaine.org.

‘They tell you the last lake they were at before you even ask’

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On tours of inspection sites in the Lakes Region on Saturday, June 15 and Saturday, June 28, most inspectors reported seeing considerably fewer boats so far this season, but more boaters who are well-educated about invasive plants.

Even at Sebago Lake State Park, the boat traffic was pretty light, said Kate Baldwin, who’s in her second year as an inspector. She usually works at Crystal Lake in Harrison, but was subbing at Sebago, where she appreciated both the shade at the launch site and the boaters’ good will.

“Just about everybody already knows what to expect. They’re used to the routine. They tell you the last lake they were at before you even ask,” Kate said. “I’ve never had a refusal.”

Courtesy boat inspectors are trained to inspect boats entering and leaving lakes, and they provide this service only with boater permission. They also promote a self-inspection ethic, encouraging boaters to inspect their watercraft and trailers for invasive plants that may “hitchhike” from lake to lake.

Melissa Panter and Christian Oren check boats at Songo Lock on the Songo River, which connects Sebago Lake and Brandy Pond. Like many new CBIs, Melissa worried about approaching boaters, but found it easier than she imagined.

“It’s scary the first day, but I’m really social so after a couple of people I was fine,” Melissa said.

Only 28 of Maine’s 6,000 ponds and lakes contain an invasive aquatic plant species, including 25 with variable leaf milfoil.

“While that proportion is the envy of more heavily-infested neighboring states and provinces, it also means we potentially have the most to lose. Our courtesy boat inspectors provide a powerful line of defense,” said Paul Gregory, an environmental specialist for the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s invasive species program

Jim and Jackie Fitzgerald, who have been inspectors for five years, are seeing many boaters at Little Sebago Lake who are knowledgeable about invasive plants and they’re also meeting others who are very interested in learning more.

“Sometimes you start talking about milfoil and you’ll have a half circle of people around you listening,” Jim said.

The Fitzgeralds estimate boat traffic has been down 40 to 50 percent at the Little Sebago boat launch in Windham. That Saturday they’d seen just 40 boats by late afternoon, when they would have expected 100.

Business also has been slow at the Lord Road boat launch on Pleasant Lake in Casco. “Not many boats,” said Gus Espeaignette, who’s been an inspector for five years. “I think it’s the gas prices.”

If that trend holds statewide, it may be difficult to exceed last year’s record 49,783 inspections, a 23 percent increase over 2006. The numbers are important because every boat inspection tallied represents one less opportunity for an invasive aquatic plant to infest Maine waters. Courtesy boat inspections, along



Kate Baldwin inspects a boat at Sebago Lake State Park.

with the actions of responsible boat owners and operators across Maine, help control the spread of invasive aquatic plants. No new invasive aquatic plant infestations were confirmed in 2007.

As of June 24, four plants have been sent to the Volunteer Lakes Monitoring Program for identification and none have been invasives. But the VLMP expects to identify from 100–150 plants this season, said Roberta Hill, program director.

After three years as an inspector, Gary Garcelon can tell a lot about a boat when it backs into the boat launch at Route 121 on Thompson Lake in Oxford. “See this boat looks real clean,” he commented and when he inspected the boat out, it was clean.

What’s the hardest thing about being a CBI? “Occasionally we get some difficult customers – for want of a better word,” Gary said with a laugh. “What I tell the young folks is to remember you’re not an enforcer. Don’t argue.”

Espeaignette was one of several inspectors who have noticed quite a few out-of-state boats without milfoil stickers. He wondered if an education/outreach effort should be directed at marinas, which often service or store the boats. Elaine Cummings, at the nearby Mayberry Hill boat launch, said the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond Association purchased five non-resident milfoil stickers so it could sell them to non-residents when the town office was closed. They’ve sold two and expect to sell the others before the end of the season.

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

“Inspectors logged a total of 26,534 inspection hours in 2007, roughly equivalent to 13 year-round, full-time employees,” Gregory said. “While DEP provides \$60,000 derived from the milfoil sticker fee to support participating organizations, it’s the hard work by local lake stewards – mostly volunteers – that makes the courtesy boat inspection program a success.”

Native or Invader?



Bladderwort

into the water column and therefore is confused with variable leaf milfoil. On close examination, bladderwort displays its namesake — small water-filled bladders. Despite their tiny size, the bladders are complex traps for organisms swimming by.

When a small animal rubs against trigger hairs located at the entry to each bladder, a trap door releases and the bladder sucks in the door, the prey and the water surrounding it. Once the bladder fills with water, the door closes again and the victim is trapped for a meal.

Variable leaf milfoil is similar in general appearance, but is not carnivorous and does not have bladders.

It looks similar to a bottle brush and the milfoil we see in the lakes region usually demonstrates a telltale maroon stem.

If you find a suspicious plant or one you're not comfortable eliminating as a possible invasive, send it in to the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program for identification or turn it in to the local CBI program director, who will either confirm it is not invasive or send it in to the VLMP for positive identification.

Refer to the "Aquatic Plant Picture Guide" supplied to all trained inspectors or the VLMP's online virtual herbarium at www.mciap.org/herbarium.



Variable Leaf Milfoil

Maine's milfoil law passed by just one vote

By Peter Lowell
LEA Executive Director

A recurring image for me this winter was the lake bottom of Brandy Pond where LEA found several new clusters of milfoil in late fall of last year. I kept imagining what was going on down there under the cover of ice.

What could provide the plot to a grade "B" horror movie has become part of our lives and routine at LEA since Jim Tabor of Keoka Lake first introduced milfoil to us at an LEA Board of Directors meeting in 1998. I wondered at the time why this was not the buzz in Maine and decided to spread Jim's word by arranging for a meeting with the commissioners of Maine's natural resource agencies.

They seemed genuinely concerned, but suffered from the same paralysis of disbelief that I had initially experienced. It was difficult to imagine Maine's lakes being anything other than clean and clear.

Then, LEA worked with Rich Thompson,

You're invited to join LEA on **July 3**, for a **Floating Open House** on the S.S. Libra suction harvester, at 10 a.m. at the Naples Causeway, and on **July 8** for the **Long Lake – Brandy Pond Operation Clean Sweep** survey to check for invasive plant growth. LEA staff and volunteers will meet on the Causeway at the Town of Naples dock at 9 a.m. and, after a training session, quadrants of each lake will be checked. For more information, contact lakes@leamaine.org or 647-8580.

a state representative from Naples, to pass the law making it illegal to transport invasive plants.

LEA organized the first Milfoil Summit in 2000 to help implement Thompson's bill. This law kicked the door open for the next wave of legislation, which created the Invasive Aquatic Plant Program.

Howard Corwin of the Greater Lovell Land Trust, Ship Bright of the Maine Lakes Conservancy Institute, the Congress of Lake Associations and LEA were the prime movers in the successful fight to establish this remarkable program. With the help of many key legislators, such as John Martin of Eagle Lake, the expanded

"Milfoil Law" passed the Maine House by one vote and became law.

How different things would have been if a few individuals had not acted in a timely manner. A few more years of inaction could have put Maine in the major infestations category with the rest of New England.

The flip side of the Brandy Pond winter nightmare is the realization that Maine had some kind of invisible shield that kept these plants at bay long enough for us to act decisively.

We do have 26 lakes in serious trouble, but the numbers could have been far worse.

Upcoming events

Program	Date/Time	Place	Sponsor
Floating Open House, S.S. Libra suction harvester	July 3, 10 a.m.	Naples Causeway	LEA
Invasive Plant Patrol Introduction	July 8, 2 -7:30 p.m.	City Hall, Ellsworth	VLMP
Long Lake/ Brandy Pond Invasive Plant Survey	July 8, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. (Rain date July 9)	Naples Causeway	LEA
Invasive Plant Patrol Introduction	July 10, 3 - 8:30 p.m.	Hartland Town Office	VLMP
CBI Training	July 12, 1-3 p.m.	Old Town Hall, Orland	Toddy Pond Association
IPP Advanced: Survey Field Methods	July 12, 8 a.m.-noon	Damariscotta Lake	VLMP
<u>Deadline to get CBI survey forms for the first half of the summer to LEA</u>	July 15	Bridgton	LEA
Invasive Plant Patrol: Introduction	July 16, 3:30 - 9 p.m.	Central Fire Station, Casco	VLMP
Invasive Plant Patrol: Introduction	July 22, 3- 8:30 p.m.	Kiwanis Hall, Standish	VLMP
Invasive Plant Patrol: Introduction	July 30, 2-7:30 p.m.	Portage Town Office	VLMP
Invasive Plant Patrol: Introduction	July 31, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.	Birch Point Campground, Island Falls	VLMP
<u>Interim grant reports due at LEA</u>	August 1	Bridgton	LEA
IPP Advanced: Survey Field Methods	August 2, 8 a.m.-noon	Gardiner/Richmond	VLMP
Invasive Plant Patrol: Introduction	August 6, 3- 8:30 p.m.	Greenville School	VLMP
IPP Advanced: Survey Field Methods	August 9, 8 a.m. – noon	Moosehead Lake	VLMP
Advanced Plant ID	TBA	Acton Region	VLMP
Advanced Plant ID	August 19, 1- 5 p.m.	Ellsworth	VLMP
IPP Advanced: Survey Field Methods	August 23, 8 a.m.- noon	Penobscot River	VLMP
<u>Deadline to get CBI survey forms for the second half of the summer to LEA</u>	September 15	Bridgton	LEA
Final grant reports due at LEA	October 10	Bridgton	LEA
Contacts: VLMP, www.mainevolunteerlakemonitors.org, vlmp@mainevlmp.org, 207-783-7733			
LEA, www.mainelakes.org, lakes@leamaine.org, 207-647-8580, 230 Main Street, Bridgton ME 04009			