

Seymour Lake has survived yet another year without invasive species! The odds of being invasive-free get worse every year as surrounding lakes become infested (Derby Pond, Lake Memphremagog, Lake Willoughby, Island Pond, Crystal Lake, Brownington Pond, to name a few). The major culprit, as most of you know, is Eurasian water milfoil, which has been present in the United States as a non-native invasive aquatic weed for decades. This year we inspected over 1,900 boats and caught 16 boats with trailer hitch-hikers before they launched into Seymour. Of those 16 catches, 6 were identified as milfoil.

So what's the big deal anyhow? What are a few extra weeds in the lake? Ask any lakeshore property owner at any of the many infested lakes in our area and they'll tell you. Because the invasive species don't have any local specimens that can compete against them in these ecosystems, the "visitors" take over. And what a mess they make! The excessive growth of these unwanted transplants make swimming and boating difficult. When motorboats drive through the overgrown areas, they chop the weeds up making a floating debris mess. These stray fragments and clumps can wash up on any shore, depending which way the wind is blowing. As the plant debris decays, the aromatic smells will compete with your local manure spreading operation. From an ecosystem perspective, the excessive plant biomass dies off each year and decomposes on the bottom of the lake, which leads to increased nutrient content and detritus buildup—acceleration of the "death" of a water body. In other words, everything gets out of balance.

Because Seymour had one of the first and more aggressive invasive species programs, we remain invasive-free; however, it is really only a matter of "when" it occurs and not "if" it oc-

curs. The good news is that because of the constant vigilance of our program, a likely infestation will be discovered in a timely manner and remedial actions can be taken.

In the case of Eurasian water milfoil, it only takes a fragment the size of your thumbnail to start a new infestation. Most transportation of invasive species occurs on boats going between lakes, hence the success of our long-term boat greeting and inspection program. But it only takes one, and not everyone is conscientious about cleaning their boats between lakes. So, it may look like a nice cushy job—to sit at the fishing access and look at boats all day—but the importance of this process cannot be underestimated.

What can you do? You can communicate to friends, renters, fishermen (women) that Seymour is invasive-free and that a clean boat is important to a clean lake. Each year a Vermont Invasive Patroller (VIP) workshop is held in the area to train people to identify invasive species. Every new VIP helps to increase the education level, which contributes to keeping Seymour the beautiful, clean, pristine lake that we love.

It's also important to mention that none of this would be possible without you. Local people who love this lake are the ones who have checked boats, searched the lake bottom, written grants, and gotten the word out. A special note of thanks to Janet Selby, who has volunteered for the last seven years to run the aquatic invasive program. She's recently stepped back from coordinating the greeter program and grant but is still involved with the regular patrol of the visible lake bottom. Much thanks and gratitude to Janet and the many other volunteers like her who make Seymour special. □