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VARIABLE-LEAF WATERMILFOIL FOUND IN LAKE CHAMPLAIN'S SOUTH BAY

Variable-leaf watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*), an aquatic invasive plant, has been found in the South Bay of Lake Champlain, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced today.

Variable-leaf watermilfoil is difficult to control once a population is established in a waterbody. It is able to grow in a wide variety of environmental conditions, is aggressive and grows rapidly. Dense growth of variable-leaf watermilfoil crowds out beneficial native aquatic plants and can impair recreational uses including boating, fishing and swimming.

“It is unfortunate that this invasive species was found in Lake Champlain’s South Bay,” DEC Regional Director Betsy Lowe said. “It is important for boaters and anglers to take proper precautions to prevent the spread of watermilfoil to other water bodies.”

More than 20 acres of watermilfoil was observed in the southern portion of South Bay. It was growing in waters up to 6 feet deep with densities ranging from 5 percent to 50 percent.

While this is the first known site of this aquatic invasive plant in Lake Champlain waters in New York, in September 2009, the aquatic invasive plant was found in Lake Champlain’s Missisquoi Bay in Vermont. The species has also been identified in other waters in many waters in the Adirondack’s including waters in the Saranac River watershed which flows into Lake Champlain.

Due to the extent of the growth officials have determined that a rapid response to eradicate the plant was not feasible. The plant spreads by stem pieces, roots and seeds. Plant parts can easily hitchhike on recreational equipment if not removed. Boaters are being warned to avoid beds of watermilfoil to prevent spreading the plant further.

Boaters, anglers and other recreational enthusiasts should take precautions to avoid transporting this and other invasive species to other waters or other parts of Lake Champlain. Before launching a boat and after retrieving a boat from the water boaters should:

INSPECT all boating and fishing equipment for invasive species. Outboard motor props, depth finder transducers and even fishing lures are great places for invasive species to attach.

REMOVE any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment. Discard items in an upland area or in one of the invasive species disposal stations that have been installed at many boat launch sites for your convenience.

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CLEAN & DRY anything that comes into contact with water including boats, trailers, waders, bait buckets and other boating and fishing equipment. Boaters should be particularly aware of baitwells, livewells and bilge areas that are difficult to dry.

DISINFECT your boating and fishing equipment with a disinfectant if it cannot be dried before it is used in another body of water.

Information on variable-leaf watermilfoil may be found on the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation at: http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/lakes/htm/ans/lp_mhett.htm

More information on preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species may be found on the DEC website at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/48221.html>

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