

News Release



For Release: Immediate

Regarding: Great Lake Fisheries Money to Address Champlain Invasive Species, Habitat issues

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Contact: Bill Howland, Lake Champlain Basin Program (802) 372-3213 or Dave Tilton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (802) 872-0629

Grand Isle, VT – Senator Patrick Leahy has secured a 2009 appropriation in the Great Lakes Fishery Commission budget to help implement Lake Champlain water quality and habitat improvements. An allocation of \$500,000 will be transferred to the Lake Champlain Basin Program and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to help prevent the spread of the spiny water flea, provide technical assistance for wetland restoration, implement riparian, in-stream, and wetland habitat improvements, and clean-up debris and toxic substances from Law Island in Colchester, VT.

“Lake Champlain's needs are a high priority for all Vermonters, and they certainly are for me,” said Leahy, long a champion of the lake who has used his senior post on the Senate Appropriations Committee to secure lake-related funds and resources. “I am pleased to see that the Lake Champlain Basin Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service together will use these funds to help scientists, anglers, local communities and state and federal agencies in advancing our common goal of making sure the environmental and economic benefits of our lake will be there in the future.”

The following five priority projects will receive funding:

Spread Prevention for the Spiny Water Flea

The Spiny water flea was found in New York’s Great Sacandaga Lake in October, 2008. There is a danger that this species may move into Lake Champlain through the Champlain Canal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use up to \$100,000 for a feasibility study and preliminary design to prevent the spread of spiny water fleas from Great Sacandaga Lake to Lake Champlain through the Champlain Canal. This project will identify barrier options and the likely effectiveness of each spread prevention alternative. The report will also provide a detailed construction cost estimate which can be used in requesting funds for the chosen alternative.

Technical Assistance for Wetland Restoration with USDA-NRCS

In Vermont, the Wetland Reserve Program has experienced increased funding levels and landowner participation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will work with USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service to help implement conservation provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wetland specialist will provide technical expertise for wetland restoration assessment, survey, design, permitting, and construction. The Service will assist with the restoration of up to 800 acres the first year and leverage up to \$3.8 million in project funds.

Riparian and Stream Habitat Restoration

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program works with private landowners, State and Federal agencies and other groups to implement habitat restoration projects throughout Vermont. Currently the Partners Program has identified about 140 acres and 21 miles of potential riparian habitat and 12 miles of in-stream aquatic habitat for restoration. The new funds will enable the US Fish and Wildlife Service to implement many of these habitat protection projects.

Local Habitat Restoration and Connectivity Grants Program supports up to \$100,000 in the Lake Champlain Basin

The Lake Champlain Basin Program will seek proposals to improve Lake Champlain wildlife habitat. Grants will be available to municipalities, NGOs, educational institutions, Natural Resources Conservation Districts and Soil and Water Conservation Districts in New York and Vermont. Projects that promote a healthy and diverse community of fish and wildlife and protect, conserve, and restore Lake Champlain Basin wetlands, streams, and riparian habitats will be chosen for funding. Proposals will be sought in fall, 2009.

Removal of dilapidated buildings and related hazardous materials from the shoreline area of Law Island, Colchester, Vermont.

Law Island is an 8.5 acre island in Lake Champlain, now owned by the State of Vermont and located within the township of Colchester, VT. Five small dilapidated buildings and two junk cars are located on the shoreline. Hazardous waste materials tests in 2007 revealed lead and asbestos contamination associated with the building materials. The Lake Champlain Basin Program will issue a Request for Proposals in 2009 for a contractor to remove all building materials, abandoned cars, accumulated refuse and debris from Law Island.

For further information of these projects contact Bill Howland, Lake Champlain Basin Program, 54 West Shore Road, Grand Isle, Vermont 05458 or call (802) 372-3213 or Dave Tilton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 11 Lincoln Street, Essex Junction, Vermont (802) 872-0629.