

**LACC: Have DASH,  
Will travel**

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**BRCA relies on  
'Power of Three'**

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# Milfoil Update 2010

Fall

## Pleasant Lake off infested list



**A yellow impervious curtain quarantines the lagoon infested with hydrilla at Damariscotta Lake as DEP contractors conduct a herbicide treatment in August.**

### **DEP reports progress on Salmon Lake and Pickerel Pond**

**By Paul Gregory**  
*Maine DEP Invasive  
Species Program*

It's a rare feat anywhere, but for the second time Maine officials declared a once-infested water body free of its plant invasion.

In mid-September, Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced that three variable milfoil-free years earned Pleasant Lake in Casco official removal from the state roster of 34 infested water bodies.

The only other lake to be removed

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## Lower Songo, Sebago present a huge risk

**By Peter Lowell**  
*LEA Executive Director*

The Lakes Environmental Association has spent five years and almost \$250,000 working to clean the upper Songo River and Brandy Pond in Naples. Brandy Pond outlets to the Songo River, which is a major tributary of Sebago Lake.

When LEA began work, there were about three acres of variable milfoil in the river and at ma-

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**Boats crowd Songo Lock through the summer.**

# TLEA enjoys a new office

The Thompson Lake Environmental Association (TLEA) is pleased to announce that it has a new office at 163 Pleasant Street, Oxford.

It is a specially designed, environmentally friendly mobile building with a large meeting room, a kitchenette and an office for the use of our Youth Conservation Corps group.

The facility represents an expenditure of about \$50,000. It is situated on land leased to the association by Chris and Marcia Pottle, longtime TLEA members, at the very generous rate of \$1 per year for 10 years.

The new quarters are especially appreciated by the association since it has been without its own site for more than three years. Unfortunately, due to space limitations the building is not ADA compliant, however the telephone number, 207-539-4535, remains unchanged.

The association conducts its annual meeting in the Oxford Recreation Building on King Street and sponsors a BBQ dinner in August at the Agassiz Village in Poland.



**TLEA now has a large meeting room, a kitchenette and an office for its Youth Conservation Corps.**

Several of TLEA's directors are seasonal residents.

The association's milfoil harvesting efforts were very successful this summer, thanks in part to funding through the MMI grant, and to hard work by an expanded McVety Milfoil Removal crew working long days.

**– Bob Tracy, TLEA secretary**

## Milfoil not observed on Middle Range Pond

We were fortunate to discover milfoil early on our pond and to have it contained in a relatively small area (30 feet x 600 feet) with only a handful of viable plants and not in a high traffic area.

Gloria and I pulled plants by hand for several years before trying 5 x 5 benthic barriers. Over the period of three seasons, we seem to have eliminated the milfoil from the area. For the last two seasons, we have not observed any milfoil (yeah!).

We will continue to mark the area for next year as a high-risk area and if no plants are found, we may be able to remove our lake from the danger list.

**– Robert D Limoges**

**The Milfoil Update** is produced by the Lakes Environmental Association with funds generated by the Maine Lakes and Rivers Protection Sticker and the support of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

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[www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/topic/invasives/index.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/topic/invasives/index.htm)

# Journalist heightens awareness of the invasive plant threat

By Paula Monaghan

Collins Pond Improvement Association

Jeff Toorish came to Windham in early August to make an educational video about the aquatic invasive plant problem in Collins Pond. Collins Pond resident and diver, Luis Heros, worked with Jeff Toorish to arrange the visit and resulting video.

Mr. Toorish shared his incredible skills, knowledge and talent in helping Collins Pond residents record interviews in his video which is titled "**Milfoil – Stop the Invasion.**"

The video can be viewed at: <http://vimeo.com/14223614>.

Jeff Toorish is a writer, photojournalist and documentary producer who specializes in underwater stories. He is a former political reporter and anchor at WMTW-TV. Jeff is currently the chief photojournalist for Advanced Diver Magazine. His work (on land) has recently been published in a book titled "Chosen Faith, Chosen Land, The Untold Story of America's 21st Century Shakers" published by Downeast Printing. His website is: <http://jefftoorish.com>.



**Jeff Toorish is a writer, photojournalist and documentary producer.**

## Bronzeback Mainiacs inspect 42 bass boats

In the photo at right, three inspectors from the Bronzeback Mainiacs, a bass fishing club based in Lewiston, check a boat at the Denis Grondin Memorial Open Bass Tournament on September 9.

The club's certified inspectors checked 42 boats prior to launching and prior to removal from tournament waters (Androscoggin River/ Gulf Island Pond ). They found absolutely no plants on boats, trailers, or live wells. The photo shows how clean this bass boat was before it launched.

I can attest that all the bass anglers I know (over 350 of them) have boats that are that clean and even cleaner. We take great pride in our investments.



The Bronzeback Mainiacs club is committed to helping the LEA and the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department in collecting data. We have sent all data to the appropriate IFW person in charge of receiving said data.

*–Ray Boies, president of the Bronzeback Mainiacs*

# LACC hired to help at Messalonskee Lake

**By Leslie Bridgers**

*Morning Sentinel Staff writer*

OAKLAND – Since Monday, Steve Church has spent six hours a day submerged under Messalonskee Lake, plucking milfoil plants that are sucked up by a vacuum and spewed onto the deck of the Limwater.

With a rake, Dave Sanfason, the boat's captain, tosses tangled bunches of the invasive plant into a metal basket that will be hauled off to the Oakland Transfer Station on a backhoe.

The Messalonskee Lake Association hired Church and Sanfason to spend a week picking milfoil from some of the most heavily-infested and high-traffic areas of the lake.

Mike Willey, the association's president, said milfoil can't be eradicated, but it can be controlled. The use of Church, Sanfason and the Limwater is one of the mitigation efforts that began this year and will continue annually, Willey said.

"We monitored it for a long time to figure out how bad it was," he said. "This is the first year we've done a significant amount of work."

Willey said there's been milfoil in Messalonskee Lake for about 20 years. If it's not controlled, the plant will

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*Morning Sentinel photo by David Leaming*

**Dave Sanfason of Lake Arrowhead Conservation Council uses a rake to transfer variable milfoil from one container to another.**



*Morning Sentinel photo by David Leaming*

**Dave Sanfason, in rain gear, takes scuba gear from Steve Church while Church harvested milfoil from the bottom of Messalonskee Lake in Oakland in September.**

# LACC

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continue to spread and impede recreational uses of the lake.

"You can't boat in it, you can't swim in it, you can't use the lake for what we use it for," he said.

The Limwater is a diver-assisted suction harvester (DASH), the second such boat built by the Lake Arrowhead Conservation Council based in Waterboro.

Captains and divers have been using the two boats on that lake, which has a more severe milfoil problem than Messalonskee, throughout the summer. That work wrapped up last week, and so the conservation council lent the boat to the lake association for a \$5,000 fee.

Church, an experienced commercial diver and underwater welder, pulled up enough milfoil to fill the basket once by the end of the day Tuesday. Sanfason said he wasn't sure how much milfoil the basket holds, but that it's about the same as 150 onion bags.

For the first half of the week, Church and Sanfason worked by the public boat launch in Oakland. Willey said it was an important place to control milfoil because of the amount of boats that pass through there. When the boats drive through the milfoil, they break the plant and drag pieces to different parts of the lake, spreading the infestation.

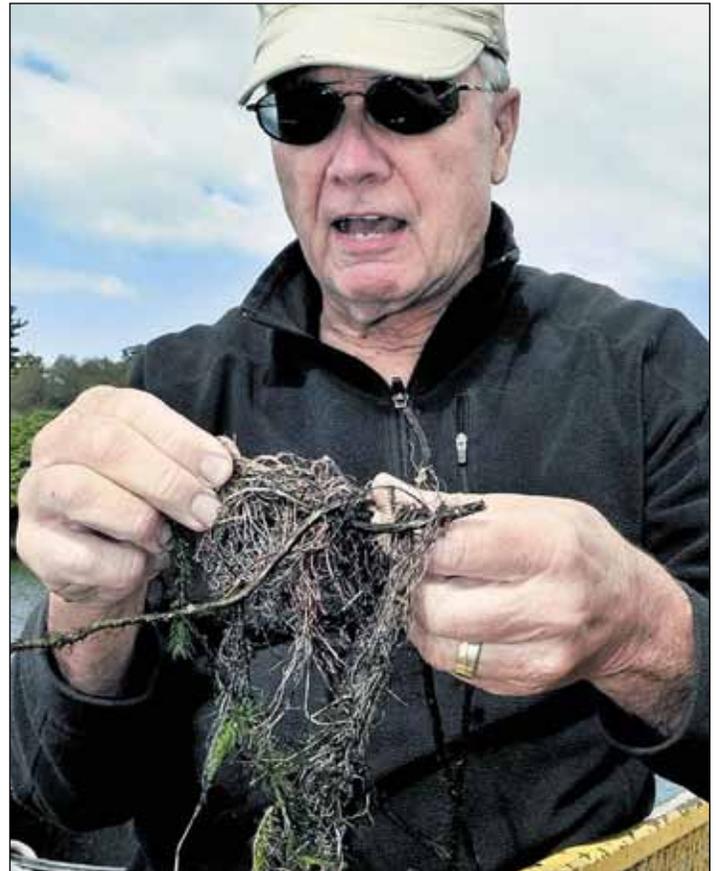
That's probably how variable-leaf milfoil, which is native to Florida, ended up in many of Maine's lakes – carried up on boats that are used in both states.

Earlier this summer, the lake association hired a professor from the University of Maine at Farmington to draw a map of Messalonskee Lake, showing the places where the problem was worst.

"He found a fairly big bloom right in here," Willey said about the area around the boat launch.

A \$13,500 grant from the U.S. Department of Fish & Wildlife, along with private donations, funded the map work and will cover the cost of using the Limwater.

It also paid for barriers that were installed in Au-



*Morning Sentinel photo by David Leaming*

**Mike Willey, president of the Messalonskee Lake Association, examines a variable milfoil plant and roots harvested in September.**

gust to create channels, clear of milfoil, so that boats could travel more easily.

Willey said he believes Messalonskee is the only one of the Belgrade Lakes that has a significant milfoil problem. But, according to Sanfason, who's watched the plant spread through the chain of lakes by the Little Ossipee River in southern Maine, that won't be the situation for long.

"Once it's in the watershed, it's in the watershed," Sanfason said. "If they don't have it now, they'll have it later."

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***"It was a great learning experience for LACC . . . By working with other Maine waterbodies such as Messalonskee, we get to share best practices learned in the fight against invasive plants. Mike Willey and the folks at Messalonskee were absolutely wonderful to work with."***

*– Dave Sanfason*



**Roberta Hill, program director, Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants, and her staff from the Maine Volunteer Lakes Monitor Program conducting the training session.**

## ***Sabbathday Lake holds IPP field training***

The Sabbathday Lake Association sponsored an Invasive Plant Patrol workshop at Outlet Beach on July 24. We had a terrific initial turnout of volunteers that participated in the training program and everyone came away with a new appreciation of the task ahead.

The SDLA members who participated in IPP field training were, Abby Lumsden, Lucinda Brandt, Janet Lambert, Rick and Cheryl Fortier, Carol and Allen Marsh, Stu Belden, Jesse Ricardi, Chris Ricardi, Sharon Scannell, Ellie Fellers, Mike, Joan and Mary Cloutier, Paula Gauthier and Paul Gillis.

Roberta Hill, program director, Center for Invasive

Aquatic Plants, and her staff from the Maine Volunteer Lakes Monitor Program conducted the training session which demonstrated how to do an invasive aquatic plant screening.

Both the weather and the lake cooperated with mild temperatures and calm conditions. Our training consisted of a Level One screening of the area from Loon point on the south to Outlet Beach to the north. This is an area which has a lot of fishing activity which means it was more susceptible to the introduction of invasive plants.

We broke out into two-person teams and spent the better part of 2 hours in a methodical routine which allowed everyone to view the lake bottom and gather samples of plants for identification at the conclusion of the survey. After the survey was completed we gathered for a review of the process and a chance to identify the plants gathered. It was a productive day and the training was hailed as a complete success. The bottom line is that NO invasive plants were found or identified.

*– Mike Cloutier*

# BRCA's 'Power of Three'

**By Corrinne Dawson**

*Conservation Corps and Milfoil Program Director  
Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance*

People ask us here at the BRCA why invasive plants are a concern. An invasive species lacks natural predators or controls in its new environment. When an invasive species catches hold in a favorable area, it can grow out of control like any weed in your garden.

This can cause different problems that will affect you personally. Boaters and swimmers can have problems getting through thick mats of plants as it is, and an invasive plant can exponentially extend this vegetation patch adding more difficulty.

Fishermen may be enticed by the fabulous habitat aquatic vegetation can provide, but with the degradation of native plants and possibility of choking out other native species, including food sources as well as the game species itself, the fantastic fishing can decrease quickly.

Own a shorefront property? Take a look at property prices of a house on a lake with an infestation and compare it to a house of similar stature on a lake without infestation and you can find out how much investment you can lose with the discovery of an invasion.

The BRCA's Milfoil Program runs on a three-step system and when they work together things get done. So, as another season ends for the Milfoil Program here in the Belgrade's, I want to share with everyone the amazing progress resulting from the hard work of staff and volunteers around the watershed.

## **Tier One: Prevention**

The Courtesy Boat Inspection program, our first line of defense in fighting these aquatic invaders, has been around for many years and each season we have more and more ramp coverage and boat inspections by paid inspectors and volunteers. The seven public ramps, consisting of Long Pond, Great Pond, East Pond, North Pond, Salmon Lake and Mesalonskee's Oakland and Sidney boat launches are expected to top 10,000 inspections and 6,000 hours for the season.

This year we have had two saves, both in early July. Kerry Schlosser turned in a plant fragment found on a Massachusetts boat last in the Connecticut River. Kerry had mentioned that the boater was unaware

of the growing problem of invasive aquatic plants, which proves that sometimes we are the first people to inform the public on the risks these plants pose to the lakes and how people can help.

The second save came from Doug McCafferty of Whisperwood Camps, Eurasian water milfoil was found on a boat trying to hitch a ride, this time into Salmon Lake.

Public boat ramps maintained by the state are accessible 24 hours a day, so we are covering less than a third of the time boat ramps can be used. While the hours covered are strategically planned by ramp location, lake, time and day, we obviously cannot cover all day every day and there is always room for more inspectors.

With that said, if you would like to become a trained volunteer you can talk to the president of your lake association or contact me.

## **Tier Two: Early Detection**

Our second strategy for fighting invasive plants is early detection. We do this through surveys we call Invasive Plant Patrols (IPPs). They focus on the high-risk areas of waterbodies, including public boat launches, inlets from infested lakes and the littoral zone, which is the shoreline of the lake to a depth of approximately 15 feet.

This year East Pond, Long Pond, North Pond, Salmon

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**Volunteer Lea Ramirez helps with the Invasive Patrol Program.**

# BRCA

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Lake and Great Pond boat ramps were surveyed along with the entire littoral zone of Salmon Lake, Hatch Cove, Belgrade Stream and the majority of McGrath Pond.

We have 40 volunteers in the watershed who have put in more than 340 hours of plant patrolling. Whether it is by canoe, kayak, boat, diving or snorkeling, we spend several hours searching for trouble-making plants in the vulnerable areas.

It may sound like hard work, but enjoying the weather, water and wildlife while achieving a goal makes it worthwhile and there is real camaraderie among our team of plant patrollers.

We are always looking for more help, so if you do want to become a certified plant patroller please contact me, as you can see there are multiple places we survey each year. However, you don't even have to be a certified invasive plant patroller to take part in the fun.

We team up certified with non-certified all the time and we encourage all shorefront property owners to keep an eye out around their dock for suspicious plants throughout the year.

Bottom line: if you enjoy kayaking or canoeing, you can help.

## ***Tier Three:***

### ***Rapid Response***

It is unfortunate that we needed a rapid response to an infestation this year, but as reported earlier an infestation of variable leaf milfoil was found and verified in Great Meadow Stream.

This stream, which runs from the southern end of North Pond into the North Cove area of Great Pond, has been the focus of efforts



**Dick Enright assists BRCA Executive Director Pete Kallin as he hand-pulls variable milfoil at Great Meadow Stream.**

for the past few months.

With the help of the coordinated efforts from the BRCA, Belgrade's Lakes Association and Maine Department of Environmental Protection, we have been collecting volunteers and professionals alike to help plan, organize and take action to fight milfoil.

As soon as the infestation was verified, an emergency meeting was called to discuss and plan the outcome we wanted and how to get the community involved and aware, including:

- A milfoil marker buoy was placed at the mouth of the stream.
- Warning signs were placed at the Route 225 bridge entrance.
- A press release was issued.
- An article was printed in Summertime in the Belgrades.

- I presented information and a plea for help at the Annual Belgrades Lake Association meeting in late July.

A training session with John McPhedran of the DEP on hand-pulling got the efforts under way on August 18. Newly trained team members put in more than 250 hours in the stream, hand-pulling the milfoil from that day until September 3.

More than 400 gallons of milfoil plants were removed and were safely composted throughout the watershed. A total of 36 benthic barriers have been deployed, covering an approximate area of 7,000 square feet.

But we have much more work to do. It is inevitable that hand pulling and barrier efforts will continue for years to come, but it will get easier as time goes by to control thanks to the hard done to date.

# Friends of Cobbossee's approach pays off

By Whitney Grass

*AmeriCorps Watershed Steward  
Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed*

The Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed's three-pronged approach in milfoil eradication efforts, **Prevention, Early Detection, and Plant Control**, share equal importance in achieving the organization's mission to "protect and improve the 28 lakes and streams of the Cobbossee Watershed." Last summer, the Friends fully exercised each facet from a courtesy boat inspection "save," to a complete survey of a newly infested stream in Litchfield, and the construction of a new Diver Assisted Suction Harvester (DASH).

**Prevention:** On June 27, Courtesy Boat Inspector Morgan Chessman identified a suspicious plant fragment on a boat entering Cobbossee Lake at the Monmouth boat launch. Morgan's suspicions of the plant increased when she learned that the boat had just been in Cobbossee Stream, one of the Cobbossee Watershed's three infested water bodies.

John McPhedran of the DEP confirmed that the fragment was indeed variable leaf milfoil. Morgan, a junior at Bowdoin College, is currently studying abroad in New Zealand and has courtesy boat inspected with the Friends for two years.

"Saves" such as Morgan's, stress the importance of boat inspections in protecting our treasured water bodies. Although the Friends currently staff 10 launches every Saturday and Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day, staffing limitations point to the need for increased education efforts.

With funding from a BoatU.S. Foundation grant the Friends are working on a new self-inspection cam-

paign designed to raise awareness of the necessity of boat inspections. Plans include the designing of a bumper sticker and boat launch signage encouraging boat owners and others who enjoy lakes to remove all plants before entering and leaving the lake.

**Early Detection:** On July 12, the Friends began an extensive surveying effort of a new variable leaf milfoil infestation in Purgatory Stream first identified by Ryan Burton of the Cobbossee Watershed District. The stream, an outlet of Woodbury Pond, flows into Cobbossee Stream, an infested water body.

While the cause of this infestation is not yet clear, signage has been placed at the site and a control plan is being discussed.

**Plant Control:** In addition to current milfoil control efforts, the Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed has been awarded \$33,250 from the Maine Milfoil Consortium to fight Variable Leaf Milfoil through the construction, maintenance, and operation of a Diver Assisted Suction Harvester (DASH) unit modeled after Lake Arrowhead's DASH, the S.S. Arrowhead.

The Friends' DASH, a 24' pontoon boat supporting two large "baskets" for the removed milfoil, a hoo-kah system that provides an air supply for divers, and a suction pump for the "plant vacuum," is scheduled for a "test drive" later this fall and will be fully operational in early summer 2011.

The Friends would like to thank Clark Marine, Du-four's Welding and Machining Service, Rick Thacker, and Mert Hickey for all their hard work, dedication, and advice on the construction of this fine vessel. Thanks also to Four Towns Watershed Association, West Gardiner residents, and Friends members for their partnership and fundraising efforts.



Newly appointed Executive Director Ken Smith with the Friends of Cobbossee's DASH boat.

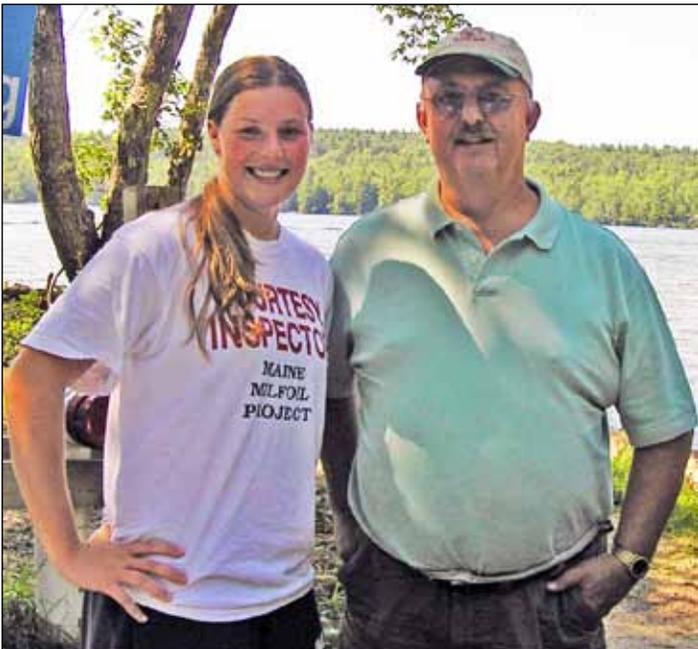
# DEP

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from the list was Great East Lake in Acton, when in 2006 volunteers removed some variable milfoil before it was allowed to take hold.

In Casco, credit goes to swift, thorough and persistent work of volunteers, namely the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond Association led by the late Joel Bloom along with Lou Wetzel, Pixie Williams and Fred Cummings. Benthic (pond-bottom) barriers and hand-removal were control options of choice.

"Removing Pleasant Lake from the list shows how committed volunteers supported by a state-run effort can out-gun one of the most persistent aquatic plants to infest Maine lakes," said Andrew Fisk, director of DEP's Bureau of Land and Water Quality. "The Pleas-



**Fred Cummings, right, of the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond Association with CBI Hilary Nurmi.**

***"Removing Pleasant Lake from the list shows how committed volunteers supported by a state-run effort can out-gun one of the most persistent aquatic plants to infest Maine lakes."***

*– Andrew Fisk, director of DEP's Bureau of Land and Water Quality.*

ant Lake/Parker Pond Association undertook a multi-year, methodical program of hand-pulling plants and laying barriers along the pond-bottom."

"Since this plant had been present in Pleasant Lake since 2001, what this group has done is remarkable," Fisk added. "What you are seeing here is a very effective state program that has helped build a strong statewide network of more than 1,500 volunteer citizen scientists to help battle invasive plants which are a real threat to Maine's lakes and ponds."

Thirty-three lakes in Maine remain on the list of waterbodies infested with invasive plants.

**Salmon Lake:** Four SCUBA surveys by DEP divers in 2010 of Salmon Lake's Kozy Cove in Belgrade found no Eurasian water milfoil (EWM) since treating the 6-acre cove with herbicide in September 2009. According to DEP and other biologists, it is a matter of when and not if this persistent milfoil species will reemerge; however, the DEP staff and surely Salmon Lake residents are happy to see this inevitability postponed.

Remaining portions of the Lake's littoral zone were surveyed by volunteers and reported free of EWM and other invasive plant species, according to Corinne Dawson, Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance.

When/if it does rebound, DEP will focus on hand-removal and benthic barrier to control a repeated, albeit smaller, invasion.

DEP used a new approach to surveying Kozy Cove; SCUBA divers were towed by a boat navigated with GPS for more comprehensive and reproducible coverage. This method worked well despite challenges of towing divers through shallow, rocky portions of the cove and limited visibility as the summer progressed.

The surface use restriction on Kozy Cove jointly ordered by the Commissioners of DEP and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife remained in effect to prevent boat traffic from fragmenting anticipated plant re-growth. And, as deployed last year, DEP staff installed and routinely maintained fragment nets near the outlet dam to protect downstream waters.

**Pickerel Pond:** "Cautiously optimistic" is the mood cited by DEP after finding no hydrilla in Pickerel Pond after the staff's annual near-shore dive of the 46-acre pond in Limerick. Visibility was poor on this dive day in July, but after seven years of surveying the Pond, DEP divers know where hydrilla thrives in the pond. Having found none in these likely spots, the staff anticipates conducting even more comprehen-

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**DEP SCUBA divers Karen Hahnel and Denise Blanchette get underway with new tandem tow system to survey Salmon Lake's Kozy Cove for Eurasian water milfoil.**

## DEP

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sive dive surveys in 2011, to evaluate the outcome of herbicide treatments done annually since 2003.

**Damariscotta Lake:** DEP's "other" hydrilla control program, namely herbicide treatment of a lagoon in Jefferson, began with a challenge. Maintaining effective herbicide concentrations in a 0.3-acre lagoon that's part of a 4,800-acre lake system called for improved impervious curtains to quarantine the lagoon.

By late August, an installation of fortified curtains provided by DEP's contractor, Aquatic Control Technology, contained the herbicide sufficiently to allow a third and last treatment that has held the herbicide to desirable levels.

The DEP staff observed chlorosis, the loss of chlorophyll, showing that the plants were starving to death. Chlorosis also indicates an effective interruption of tuber production that would have otherwise assured continued plant reproduction.

DEP dive surveys discovered only two plants in the cove just east of the treated lagoon on one dive day out of the four conducted since early summer. The most recent dive, on August 12, found no new outliers of hydrilla. DEP surface observation on September 29 also found no hydrilla in this cove.

Damariscotta Lake Watershed Association (DLWA) announced its ambitious program to survey the entire lake with volunteers paid off. There were no hydrilla sightings, which is certainly good news. This also shows the value and effectiveness of dedicated, trained and well-coordinated volunteers.

Maine DEP anticipates controlling future hydrilla growth in the lagoon with benthic barriers and removal by hand.

**Pleasant Hill Pond:** Finally, a late-summer SCUBA survey of this Scarborough pond found several patches of Eurasian water milfoil on the rebound. DEP is in discussion with the Pond owner about area residents undertaking mechanical control methods. Maine DEP has treated Pleasant Hill Pond with herbicide twice since its discovery in 2004.

# Songo

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rinias in the pond. Much of the river was heavily infested and the patches of plants at the marinas were spreading.

The Libra Foundation awarded LEA a grant to help clean up the milfoil and develop innovative control methods. LEA pioneered the use of blue "Mainer" tarps to tackle the extensive plant beds. The tarps measured 40 feet by 60 feet, allowing us to cover substantial areas relatively quickly. Specific information on this technique is available by contacting us.

The big tarps allowed LEA to get a jump on the infestation and reduced the acreage by about two-thirds. The Little Sebago Lake suction harvester then became the model for our new S.S. Libra harvester, which utilized a custom-made aluminum sluiceway. A few more tarps and continued suction harvesting finally brought the infestation under control in 2009.

This year efforts were limited to suction harvesting and hand pulling of renegade plants. In 2010, LEA staff removed a total of 100 onion bags of plants from Brandy Pond and the Upper Songo. This was a significant reduction from previous years, and the waters were cleared of plants earlier in the season. LEA hopes in another five years to reduce the infestation to just a few random plants or patches that will require yearly maintenance harvesting.

The apparent success in the Songo-Brandy waterway is the largest infestation to be brought under control in Maine and there is strong optimism for eventual eradication. The flip side to this story is the lower Songo River. Below the Songo Lock is a mile or so of river that is heavily infested and it's one of the busiest waterways in Maine.

In 2010, LEA Courtesy Boat Inspectors checked more than 4,400 boats at the lock, the majority of which were headed upstream to the upper river, Brandy Pond and Long Lake. Another 1,000 inspections were conducted at the nearby Sebago Lake State Park boat launch site where more than 50 intercepts of variable milfoil were recorded.

In early July, LEA was alarmed about the explosive growth of the plants below the lock after boat inspectors reported lots of plant fragments in the lock. Making matters worse, in May and June, boats traveling through Songo Lock increased 87.5 percent compared to the same period in 2009. This led to a request to the DEP and Department of Conservation, which runs the park, to consider closing the lock to boat traffic. We did not want to see five years of work and investment reversed.

LEA also started a successful campaign to tell boaters about the infestation on the lower Songo and en-

*As the media ran stories about LEA's efforts to protect the Upper Songo, Brandy Pond and Long Lake, the traffic on Songo Lock slowed dramatically. In August, it dropped 7.4 percent compared to last year and September traffic was 47 percent lower than in 2009.*

courage them not to go through the Lock. By the end of July, traffic already had started to level off, but it still was 27 percent higher than in July 2009.

In August, as the media began running stories about LEA's efforts to protect the Upper Songo, Brandy Pond and Long Lake, the traffic on the Lock began to slow dramatically. August boat traffic actually dropped 7.4 percent compared to August 2009 and September traffic was 47 percent lower than in 2009.

So despite the big increase early in 2010, the May through September total for 2010 was only slightly (7 percent) higher than last year.

The state agencies ultimately denied the request but placed more channel markers in the river and increased funding for inspections at the lock. These measures were clearly helpful. In several instances, inspectors took arm loads of plants off props, emphasizing the danger to upstream waters.

The LEA proposal to close the lock was opposed locally by marinas, especially those that rented boats. The debate, however, was never contentious. All parties recognized the threat but differed on their ideas for solutions. The debate will surely be re-kindled before next summer.

From LEA's perspective, the risk of infesting Long Lake and reversing the progress above the locks is simply not worth taking. We asked our members and the boating public to avoid the trip through the lock and lots of people responded. And, many boaters who spoke to inspectors seemed supportive of closing the lock.

The only way to make the lock safe is to eliminate the plants from the lower Songo River. A DEP consultant who toured the river this summer recommended increasing the channel markers. The only control method he saw as viable was benthic barriers.

LEA has a design for a barrier suitable for the river shoreline banks, where most of the plants are found, but this project is way beyond our resources.

Sebago Lake and the Songo River present an enormous threat to all of Maine's uninfested lakes, and, in our opinion, they need to be cleaned up or better safeguarded. This is a contagion that could ruin Maine's lakes, and local economies.

LEA will be working this winter to review resources, partnerships and strategies to address this problem. It will only get worse until stronger action is taken.