



# Lake George Association

*People Protecting the Lake Since 1885*

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **For IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Lake George Invasive Species Awareness Week Begins July 12th. NYS Invasive Species Council Releases New Regulatory Plan.**

Lake George's Invasive Species Awareness Week (ISAW) begins next week, and coincides with the release of a new report by the New York State Invasive Species Council. Entitled *A Regulatory System for Non-Native Species*, the report has been sent to Governor Patterson and the legislature for review.

Those interested in learning more about invasive species impacting Lake George and efforts currently in place to prevent their spread, or discussing the new regulatory system proposed by the state council, are invited to stop by the ISAW display at the Visitors Center in downtown Lake George, from 11 am – 4 pm, Monday – Friday, July 12 – 16. Representatives from the Lake George Association, the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District, and other area organizations will be on hand.

Due to a lack of natural predators, diseases and parasites, invasive species can quickly become pervasive. When they do, these species can negatively impact the ecological balance of Lake George by out-competing native species for light, nutrients, and space.

The new report by the NYS Invasive Species Council introduces a process for assessing level of threat, assessing socioeconomic value, and assigning each invasive species into a distinct category for appropriate action.

"The new regulatory system will be of tremendous value as we battle invasive species in the Lake George watershed," said Emily DeBolt, director of education for the Lake George Association.

Lake George's existing aquatic invasives -- Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, and curly-leaf pondweed -- pose a threat to the clarity, health and recreational enjoyment of the Lake. Eurasian watermilfoil spreads easily and grows quickly, crowding out native plants, reducing biodiversity, and diminishing fish habitat. "We also need to keep a lookout for spiny waterflea and water chestnut, invasive species which are present in nearby water bodies," said DeBolt.

On the land surrounding Lake George, plants like purple loosestrife, common reed and the newly identified wall lettuce can alter hydrological processes, and can change drainage patterns, soil water holding capacity, and resistance to erosion. Phragmites, shrubby honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed, Oriental bittersweet, burning bush, and Japanese barberry are additional invasive plants living around the Lake. Our surrounding forests need protection from insect invaders, such as the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB), which have had a devastating impact on tree populations in the Great Lakes and the Northeast regions.

"We need to be vigilant in preventing the introduction of new invasive plants and animals to our watershed, and effectively removing those that already exist," said DeBolt. "Increasing public awareness of the dangers of invasive species and how to prevent their spread is essential to protecting Lake George," she said.

State Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis said, "New York needs to take action now to curb the many pathways that invasive species use to make their way here. The system the Council is proposing strikes the right balance of minimizing the major threats to our ecology and economy while allowing for the careful use of those plants and animals that pose lower risks."

The new assessment process would allow the state to categorize invasive species as "prohibited," "regulated" or "unregulated." Species in the "prohibited" category would be the most restricted as they pose clear risks to New York's economic, ecological and public health interests, and, therefore, would be banned from commerce entirely. "Regulated" species would be restricted, but not prohibited from commerce, and would require practical and meaningful regulatory programs. "Unregulated" species would be identified as those non-native species that do not pose a threat and therefore could be used freely in commerce.

Two "tools" would be used in assessing risks from non-native plants and animals. One evaluates the inherent, biological "invasiveness" of each species, i.e., some species are better "weeds" than others. The other tool looks at socio-economic values to help determine whether the social benefits of a plant or animal outweigh the potential harm. For example, earthworms have often been shown to have positive effects on soil structure and fertility in agricultural and garden ecosystems; however, glacial ice sheets that covered most of New York some 11,000 to 14,000 years ago left New York worm free. Today's worms are actually European invaders and considered a non-native invasive species, but are clearly valuable.

The New York State Invasive Species Council's final report is available online at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/63402.html>.

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