

Hydrilla Invades the Cayuga Inlet in Tompkins County

Rooted in the bottom sediment and growing up to an inch a day, *Hydrilla verticillata*, quickly outcompetes native vegetation and creates a dense mat of vegetation at the surface of the water. This dense mat inhibits boat traffic, displaces natural habitat, and discourages recreational uses of the water. Spread by seed, buds (turions), tubers and vegetative fragments; this plant is often referred to as one of the worst invasive aquatic plants in the world. Due to these facts it was disheartening to hear that it had invaded the Cayuga Inlet, which feeds water into Cayuga Lake.

Hydrilla was discovered in Mid-August of 2011, and a task force was formed to respond to the threat. This team included members from Tompkins County SWCD, Cornell University, NYSDEC, City of Ithaca, NYS Parks, and other various organizations. The Tompkins County SWCD was responsible for applying for permits to apply the herbicide (Aquathol K - Endothall), coordinating the budget to hire a certified herbicide applicator, and post application monitoring of the chemical to document the spread (or lack thereof) of the chemical outside the treatment area.

In mid-October, 95 acres of the Cayuga Inlet was permitted through the NYSDEC to be treated with Aquathol K. The time span between discovery of the plant and herbicide application was due to the NYSDEC permit requirements to allow a 21 day notice to affected riparian users and landowners. The success of the treatment will be documented in the coming weeks and future eradication measures will be discussed over the winter. This is a long term commitment from all of the members of the task force and efforts will continue for several years to eradicate this plant.

This is the first known report of Hydrilla being found in Upstate New York waters. Since Cayuga Lake is a connection to the Great Lakes Ecosystem, this discovery is especially concerning. Boat traffic has been discouraged in the Cayuga Inlet and inspections, notices, and informational posters at boat launches have all been used to aid the community in helping to stop the spread of this plant. Efforts are already underway to keep a vigilant watch on other lakes and waterbodies in the region so that the spread of the plant will be thwarted.

For more information on the plant and efforts to eradicate its existence in the Cayuga Inlet Channel please visit the Tompkins County Cornell Cooperative Extension Site at:

<http://ccetompkins.org/environment/invasive-species/hydrilla>

