

INVASIVE LAKE PLANTS: WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

Maine is the only New England state that has not experienced serious infestations of invasive aquatic plants. Unless real efforts are made to prevent these plants from finding their way into our lakes and ponds, we will have to pay the high cost that other states have faced, including:

RECREATIONAL LOSSES: Heavy Plant Growth = Less Enjoyment for Everyone!

- Entanglement of boats and motors in thick weed beds
- Problems for fishermen
 - Stunted growth of some species due to high plant densities
 - Difficulty navigating
 - Impact on fisheries resulting from plant control measures;
 - Higher lake association fees
- Reduced shore front property values on lakes that are infested
- Reduced tax, retail and tourism revenues to communities with affected lakes
- A nuisance and potential danger to swimmers
- Revenues from tourism may decline

METHODS USED TO CONTROL AQUATIC PLANTS: Very Costly and Potentially Damaging to the Environment!

- **Mechanical Plant Harvesting (cutting/mowing):** \$350-\$1500 per acre. Does not remove rooting systems and ensuing plant fragments could spread plant infestation. Ongoing maintenance generally requires two to three cuttings per season to obtain acceptable control.
- **Herbicide Application:** \$300-\$1000 per acre. Costs vary depending on treatment rate, chemical used and water depth. Generally needs to be repeated every two years. Negative effects include the loss of beneficial plants, nutrient release, water use restrictions, questions concerning long-term impacts to the ecosystem, and social acceptability.
- **Bottom Barriers:** \$10,000-20,000 per acre (Professional installation). Limited application due to cost, difficulty in stabilizing large areas, and impacts on the lake ecosystem.

REAL DOLLAR COSTS TO OTHER STATES:

- **VERMONT:** Since 1980, the state has spent over six million dollars in federal, state, and local funds to prevent and control the spread of invasive aquatic plants. The state currently spends \$200,000 annually just to staff invasive plant control programs for only 46 of its 285 larger lakes.
- **NEW HAMPSHIRE:** \$100,000 in state and local operating funds is used annually to support 7-9 invasive plant control projects. This amount does not even come close to the public demand for programs for New Hampshire's 55 infested lakes.
- **MASSACHUSETTS:** Massachusetts spends over \$290,000 annually on grants for local lake projects, most of which is used to battle invasives in its 298 infested lakes. For state properties alone, \$95,000 a year is spent on operations to control invasive aquatic plants.
- **CONNECTICUT:** More than \$150,000 a year in state funds is spent to cost share local projects for invasives control.
- Many states have had to hire full time coordinators just to manage invasive plant issues!

Everyone Agrees on the Most Cost Effective Solution: PREVENTION, PREVENTION, PREVENTION!