

18th Annual Milfoil Summit

Our TLEA representatives Kathy Cain and Ron Armontrout attended the 18th Milfoil Summit on March 3, 2017, at the U.S.M. Lewiston Auburn campus. Peter Lowell of the Lake Environmental Association (LEA), presided as the summit director and the keynote speaker was Meghan Modley, management coordinator of the Lake Champlain Basin Program for Aquatic Invasive Species. The Lake Champlain Basin Program is a federally funded, non-profit organization in partnership with agencies from NY, VT, Quebec, EPA and some local groups. They monitor and track aquatic invasive species in the watersheds of Lake Champlain, which are interconnected with canals and many waterways. The Summit included training sessions for Courtesy Boat Inspectors and invasive plant patrols.

The focus of the summit was not only on milfoil but on other invasive species in general. Meghan presented the talk entitled "Dealing with Invisible invaders - are they headed to Maine?" These invasive species: zebra mussels, quagga mussels, spiny water fleas, Eurasian milfoil, water chestnuts, alewives are known to be in the bodies of water found in the Lake Champlain basin area. Some of the pathways in which invasive species can travel are via home gardening, aquarium dumping, and transportation by boats.

The origin of invasive species is complex and far reaching. Zebra mussels originated from the Black and Caspian Seas. They were transported to US waters and have adapted to the ecosystem. They alter the natural food chain which, in turn, directly affects the food source for the native species. Both zebra and quagga mussels are encrusting historic shipwrecks at an alarming rate. The spiny water flea, which is a ½" long crustacean with a barbed tail, originated from Great Britain and Northern Europe. They like zooplankton and therefore compete with the native species for food. There are some native species that like to eat the spiny water flea but there are of little nutritional value. Fish populations that rely on spiny fleas for a diet end up malnourished and a malnourished fish is prone poor health. Spiny water fleas were first detected in Lake Huron. They like deep cool water and are spreading eastward to the Southern Adirondack Lakes area, including Lake George. The only way to kill this species is desiccation (drying). Alewives were introduced in Lake Champlain as a baitfish. They are aggressive and compete with smelt for food. Landlock salmon, which are dependent on smelt as a food source, become Vitamin B deficient if they have alewives as its primary food source. Lake Champlain has seen a big decline in native smelt, presumably secondary to competition with alewives.

Asian clams are another invasive species which were introduced in 1920 on the east coast. Its shell is distinct because of its ridged surface and there is an audible sound when you run your fingernail along the shell surface. They prefer a sandy substrate for an environment. Their growth rate is rapid; a single clam will reproduce frequently and abundantly. They are present

in Lake George, and they have also been found in Lake Tahoe, California. Benthic barriers have been successful in managing this species by suffocating them. A new aquatic invasive has been found in Lake Champlain called starry stone wart, an algae with thick rings and is very dense. Starry stone wart is in their radar to be monitored and recorded

“NO SEE UM’S INVASIVES”, are the small juveniles of various species. They are often the larvae or dormant forms of species and they are not visible. To prevent the spread of these species it is critical to remove them from boats exiting or entering waterways. The mantra is “CLEAN, DRY, DRAIN” when it comes to boat inspections. Boat inspections are essential to the prevention of invasive species and boaters must be vigilant. One of the best ways to control these invisible threats is through the use of boat wash stations at launches but unfortunately this is expensive. Trained staff is required to use the power washes with 3000 PSI capacity. Boat wash locations also have to be assessed for proper runoff. The next best alternative is to flush out all boat bilges and motors using low pressure water stations. It was reported that Maine has 10 low pressure water stations. For most boat launches in Maine the routine should be: *clean, dry and drain!!*

Meghan encouraged the use of electronic data entries for all inspections. This would allow for faster access to invasive species data, locations and tracking their spread.

The latter half of the summit consisted of a trade fair with demonstrations, displays and exhibits on the latest in prevention of invasive aquatic species. There was a question/answer/update session with a panel composed of John McPhendron of the Maine DEP, Lt. Adam Gormely of the DIF&W Warden Service, Roberta Hill of the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program, Maggie Shannon of the Maine Lakes Society and Peter Lowell.

Maggie Shannon talked briefly about one of the bills/ LD559 which is an bill to protect Maine lakes and ponds from invasive species. It would require all “passive” or non-motorized crafts on inland waters to display an “invasive aquatic species sticker” which will have a onetime fee of \$5.00. The fee revenues would be distributed 50/50 with IF&W and Maine DEP.