

Divers pull 15 tons of milfoil from Chateaugay Lake Narrows

CHATEAUGAY LAKE — Divers have pulled about 15 tons of an invasive plant species from the waterway that connects the upper and lower segments of Chateaugay Lake, thanks in part to the Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College, the Chateaugay Lake Foundation announced Monday.

Dive crews pulled between one and two tons of Eurasian milfoil per week over the summer, clearing 70 of the 80 acres of milfoil beds in the 4-mile-long Chateaugay Narrows, the Foundation said in a news release. The cleared area includes 25 acres in the middle and lower Narrows that had not been touched previously, the release said.

The Narrows, which are heavily used by boaters traveling between the two portions of the lake, have become infested with milfoil. The invasive weed, a long plant with feather-like leaves that can reach a length of 10 feet, can foul boat propellers and choke waterways to the point where they become impassable.

Efforts to remove the milfoil require that the weed be pulled out by its roots — without breaking the plant. Even a small piece of milfoil can propagate, so any harvesting effort must be careful keep the plants intact as they are removed.

Milfoil is believed to have been introduced into the Chateaugay Lake water system in the late 1960s, when a new public boat launch opened. The launch made the lake more accessible to boaters from nearby infested waters such as Lake Champlain and the St. Lawrence River. In recent years, mil-

foil has become established throughout the lake system, the Foundation said.

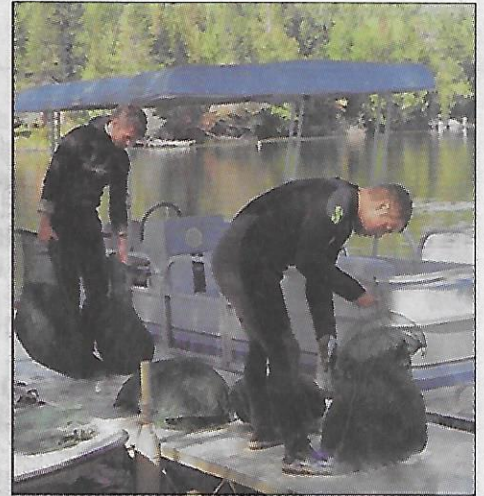
To combat the problem, lakeshore owners formed the Chateaugay Lake Foundation to raise money and hire divers to remove the weed by its roots, the Foundation said. Over the past eight years, this effort has succeeded in controlling milfoil in the most heavily used section of the Narrows -- the boat launch and boating lanes to the immediate north and south. Milfoil densities have been reduced to a small fraction of what they were when work started, the release said.

The effort to control the invasive weed received a big boost this year when the Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College, under the direction of Dr. Daniel Kelting, obtained federal Environmental Protection Agency funding to extend hand-harvesting throughout the entire Narrows.

"The Adirondack Watershed Institute has been a valuable partner in helping us and other lake groups in the Adirondacks attack the problem of invasive species," Chateaugay Lake Foundation President Mary Johnson said in the release. "We have relied on them for help with scientific monitoring and development of our milfoil management plan, as well as for providing trained divers to carry out the plan. Now they are also helping to attract funding for control efforts."

With the progress being made in the Chateaugay Narrows, the Foundation is now seeking funds to expand efforts to Upper and Lower Chateaugay Lake, she added.

Members of the Mountain View Association have also hired divers to pull milfoil



Submitted photo

Divers with the Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College unload bags of milfoil harvested from the Chateaugay Lake Narrows earlier this summer. The dive crew harvested some 70 acres of dense milfoil beds, about 90 percent of the infestation in the Narrows part of the Lake.

from Mountain View and Indian lakes. In just one day in July, divers pulled nearly a ton of weeds from the lakes. The spread of milfoil in those waterways led to the cancellation of the Association's traditional July 4 boat parade.

Association members are working with town of Bellmont officials on a proposal to dredge the lakes to remove both the weeds and the sediment that has built up and allowed them to flourish.