

Preventing New Invasions

Boat Launch Protection is Key

News from the Chateaugay Lake Foundation, April 2014

Late last summer, there was some disturbing news about the potential for zebra mussels to invade Chateaugay Lake. Researchers from Paul Smith's College had detected the presence of zebra mussel "environmental DNA" in the vicinity of the public boat launch. The term "eDNA" refers to DNA that has been shed by an organism (via excretions, decomposition, larval forms) and has been detected in the environment by sampling the water or sediment.

The technique for testing for eDNA is highly sensitive and does not mean that there is a reproducing population of an organism. However, it does indicate that an organism has been present at some point in time.

The Paul Smith's researchers tested water and sediment samples from Adirondack lakes that may be vulnerable to a zebra mussel invasion based on their calcium and pH levels. Other lakes that tested positive included Chazy Lake and Paradox Lake. Zebra mussels are already established in the region in Lake Champlain and Lake George, as well as the St. Lawrence River.

Boat Launch Stewards

For the past two years, Chateaugay Lake has been fortunate to have boat launch stewards assigned to greet boat launch users and check boats for invasive species as they enter or exit the lake. The value of this is clear from the records the stewards maintain as part of the Paul Smith's Watershed Stewardship Program.

In 2012, of 965 boat inspections, there were 29 instances of invasives found on boats entering the lake, including 2 with zebra mussels (22 had Eurasian watermilfoil and 5 had curly-leaf pondweed). No zebra mussels were found on boats exiting the lake.

In 2013, of 1,365 boat inspections, there were 8 instances of invasives found on boats entering the lake (6 had Eurasian milfoil and 2 had Variable leaf milfoil). The steward also found 155 instances of invasives on boats exiting the lake, including 133 with Eurasian milfoil and 23 with curly-leaf pondweed (an invasive plant that may be taking hold in our lake). No zebra mussels were observed on boats either entering or exiting the lake. The steward was on duty Wednesday to Sunday from Memorial Day through late August.

The Watershed Stewardship program will continue again this summer and coverage at the Chateaugay Lake boat launch may be expanded if enough stewards can be recruited. A job announcement has been posted on the Paul Smith's website at:

<http://www.paulsmiths.edu/offices/human-resources/career-opportunities/watershed?>

Be Vigilant!

Shoreowners can help watch for zebra mussels by hanging a brick from a rope off their dock, near where boats pull in. Keep the brick a foot or so from the bottom so that it doesn't silt over. Check it regularly and if it feels grittier than usual or you see something suspicious, contact us right away by email at info@chateaugaylakefoundation.org.

When you see a watershed steward at the boat launch this summer, let them know their work is appreciated!



Zebra mussels coat boat propeller