

MILFOIL COMMITTEE REPORT, 2005

Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance

Invasive Aquatic Plant Prevention, Detection and Education, 2005

Invasive aquatic plants cause a cascade of loss. Infestations make swimming and boating unpleasant and sometimes even impossible. Fisheries change. The attractiveness of lakes for recreational use declines. Tourism and local businesses are affected. Shorefront properties lose value, causing municipal tax revenues to fall.

One of the lakes in the Belgrade chain, Messalonskee (Snow Pond), is presently infested with variable leaf milfoil. First documented at the lake's southern end in 1998, the plant has infested shorelines all the way to the Oakland outlet, beyond that to the Messalonskee Stream, where it presents serious operating difficulties at the Kennebec Water District intake. It also grows clear across the Belgrade stream in several places below Wings Mill Dam.

To prevent this invasive milfoil's spread to the region's 6 other lakes and prevent the introduction of 10 other target species, the BRCA Milfoil Committee runs prevention, education, and detection programs throughout the Belgrade chain of ponds. Prevention and education are handled by the *Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) Program*, and detection is covered by the *Invasive Plant Patrol (IPP)*. Both programs focus on public boat launch sites because invasive aquatic plants move from lake to lake on the boats, trailers and equipment associated with water sports.

Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI)

The CBI Program completed 6,941 inspections on 6 lakes in 2005, a growth in inspections of 61% over the previous year. Area towns, lake associations, a private donation, and Maine's Cost Chare Grant program provided financial support, with the 5 lake associations supplying 66% of the total cost.

Variable leaf milfoil was prevented from entering Great Pond by CBI Ryan Gibbs on May 29, 2005. Thousands of boaters were informed about the dangers of invasive aquatic plants and taught the simple steps that prevent the spread of these damaging plants. 22 area youth benefited from summer jobs as CBI's, learned about lake ecology, and experienced first-hand the importance of lakes to the region's economy and the quality of life here.

Invasive Plant Surveys (IPP)

The IPP is an annual inspection of shallow areas surrounding public boat launch sites. Trained volunteers equipped with scuba diving gear inspect the lake bottom out to a depth of 15 feet while kayakers using aquascopes survey the shallows for 300 feet to either side of the launch ramp. The Survey's purpose is to find any sign of the 11 target species of invasive plants before they can become established in our lakes. In 2005, all public launch sites except those on Messalonskee Lake were inspected, as well as the Belgrade Stream above Wings Mill Dam. No invasive aquatic plants were found.

Each survey takes 4 hours and involves a team of 9 to 10 trained volunteers. Total volunteer time for 2006 amounted to 232 hours, which represents a \$4,025 contribution.

The Milfoil Committee

The Milfoil Committee includes representatives from Belgrade Lakes Association, East Pond Association, North Pond Association, McGrath Pond/Salmon Lake Association, the Snow Pond/Messalonskee Lake Association. Programs are supervised by Mike Little, the Executive Director of the BRCA and Coordinated by Maureen Maslak.

Submitted by Maggie Shannon, Milfoil Committee Chair