

# Maine Officials Work to Control The First Hydrilla Occurrence in State



For the first time in Maine's history, the aquatic invasive weed hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) has found its way into the state's waters, infesting Pickerel Pond in Southwest Maine's York County. The undesirable visitor was discovered in the fall of 2002, but due to its strong, established root system, is believed to have been growing in the 46-acre pond for four to five years.



An Aquatic Control Technologies official drives the airboat used for the herbicide treatment in Pickerel Pond.

## Challenge:

A persistent and easily spread plant, hydrilla can take over a lake. It tolerates a wide range of temperatures and has stems that can reach 30 feet in length. Hydrilla in Pickerel Pond covered 70 percent of the shoreline up to 10 feet out into the lake, crowding out native wetlands vegetation and limiting recreational use of the lake and shoreline. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) officials were keenly aware that hydrilla could get tangled on powered craft and be transported to other bodies of water in the state. Concerned with the invasive plant's power to spread, officials looked for a way to eliminate as much of the hydrilla from Pickerel Pond as was possible.

easily, it became evident that herbicide use would be the best option for managing this infestation. Aquatic Control Technologies was contracted to apply an aquatic herbicide in May to early June before hydrilla emerges, literally nipping the plant's growth in the bud.

Funding for the program was supported by the Maine Lake and River Protection Sticker program, which requires boaters to display registration on their powered craft. The stickers cost \$10 for boats registered in Maine and \$20 for those from out-of-state.

## Result:

To measure hydrilla infestation levels annually, officials deploy divers each spring. Diver reports show that the weed is still present in the lake, but the herbicide treatment has significantly reduced its density. Hydrilla can no longer be seen at the surface and its stems are no longer high enough to get caught on powered craft or anchors.

To combat the weed, DEP officials focused on a central goal: achieve 95 percent control of hydrilla each year to prevent spread within the lake and to other bodies of water. Since it was the first hydrilla occurrence in Maine, officials were determined to keep it the only occurrence in the state.

## Solution:

Officials researched a number of methods to curb the infestation, including mechanical approaches and preventing public use of the lake. However, since hydrilla had already established itself in Pickerel Pond for a few years and spreads very



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