August 14, 2025

The Honorable Adam Telle
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Dear Mr. Adam Telle,

Congratulations on your recent Senate confirmation as the new Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works. We very much look forward to working with you on aquatic plant research and management issues at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

We represent the Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), and its affiliate societies, Florida APMS, MidSouth APMS, South Carolina APMS, Midwest APMS, Northeast APMS, Texas APMS, and Western APMS, along with the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation (AERF) and the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS).

Our non-profit professional societies are dedicated to fostering an awareness of invasive weeds and the associated impacts on our environment and water resources. Collectively, we promote research, education, and extension outreach activities related to aquatic invasive weeds and provide science-based information to the public and policy makers. Our organizations consist of members from around the world including academic, governmental and private industry research scientists, students and extension educators, commercial pesticide applicators, consultants, administrators, and concerned individuals interested in the science of aquatic weed management. Overall, we represent a diverse group of public and private stakeholders with an interest in effective aquatic weed management in both managed and natural ecosystems.

As the **nation's only** federally authorized program for research and development of effective, science-based strategies to manage invasive aquatic weed species, we highlight here the strong positive impact and critical funding need for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers **Aquatic Plant Control program**.

For over 60 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has served as the lead agency for developing and sharing new and improved technologies to protect our nation's aquatic resources from aquatic invasive

weeds. The Aquatic Plant Control program is **authorized by Section 104 of the 1958 River and Harbor Act** to provide:

> *a comprehensive program to provide for* ***prevention, control, and progressive eradication of noxious aquatic plant growths and aquatic invasive species*** *from the navigable waters, tributary streams, connecting channels, and other allied waters of the United States, in the combined interest of navigation, flood control, drainage, agriculture, fish and wildlife conservation, public health, and related purposes,* ***including continued research for development of the most effective and economic control measures****, to be administered by the Chief of Engineers, under the direction of the Secretary of the Army, in cooperation with other Federal and State agencies.*

The **Aquatic Plant Control** program is the only program of its kind and is not duplicated by any other federal or state agency. This vital and comprehensive program investigates biological, chemical, ecological, and integrated approaches to combat invasive aquatic weeds to ensure ecosystem and navigation security. The Aquatic Plant Control program is the nation's original "Integrated Pest Management" program dedicated to research strategies for aquatic invasive species management.

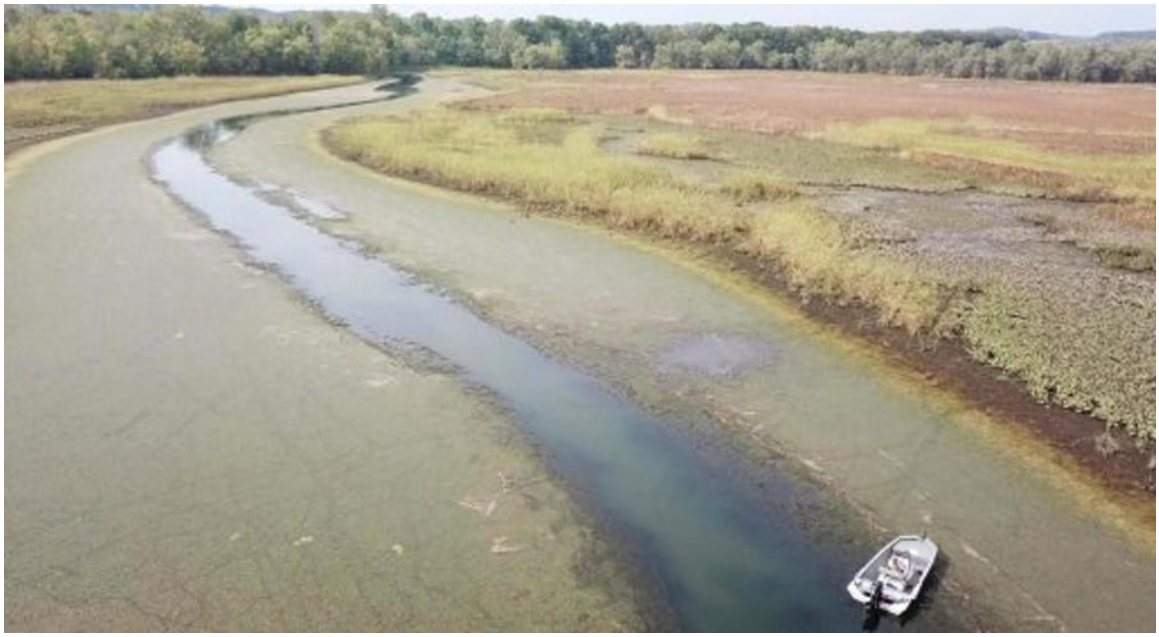
We commend the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their longstanding dedication and contributions to advancing knowledge through the research conducted under the Aquatic Plant Control program. Their continued efforts to develop and share these insights are greatly valued. However, excluding or reducing this program's funding will have significant impacts for our nation's water resources. Overall, this will result in losing and/or delaying development of essential technologies for effectively managing aquatic weeds across the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal, state and local resource agencies. Furthermore,

- It is estimated that invasive hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil populations will expand to an additional 5 to 7 million acres nationwide. Based on experience and current knowledge of growth rates of invasive aquatic species, such increases could take place within 3 to 4 years.

- **Over $100 million is spent annually** in the U.S. to control aquatic weeds; however, the estimated benefits of utilizing effective management operations are reportedly much higher (10x higher) than these costs.

- Hydrilla is a Federally Listed Noxious Weed and serves as the preferred aquatic weed for a neurotoxin-producing cyanobacterium that is directly linked to Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy, a disease which has caused the **deaths of thousands of bald eagles**, waterfowl and other birds of prey throughout the Southeastern U.S.

- A new aggressive strain of hydrilla has been discovered in the Connecticut River and other water bodies in Connecticut. This strain, first identified in 2016, is genetically distinct from other hydrilla strains found in the US. The Connecticut River hydrilla spreads rapidly, forming dense mats, which impedes navigation and displaces native aquatic species. Due to its prolific growth and spread capability, this hydrilla has the potential to extend into the Great Lakes.



A new strain of hydrilla in CT's Mattabesset River, a tributary of the CT River.
Photo taken in 2020, courtesy of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

- The Aquatic Plant Control program supports collaboration with the EPA to evaluate new, reduced-risk herbicides to replace legacy chemistries for selectively controlling the most problematic invasive plants. **New herbicides and use patterns identified in recent years have reduced chemical application rates by nearly 40%.**

- Hybridization between invasive and native aquatic plant species has been documented in recent years, yielding **hybrid weed populations that are more vigorous and difficult to control using traditional management practices**. Continued use of traditional management practices is inefficient and will result in wasteful expenditure of operational dollars.

- **Herbicide resistant** populations of hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil have also been confirmed in aquatic environments and demand new approaches to herbicide use. Costs to manage resistant hydrilla in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, headwaters of the Central and South Florida Flood Control Project, exceed $10 million annually and will continue to increase as resistant populations spread to new waterbodies.

- Development of **effective Early Detection and Rapid Response tools** are critical to prevent spread of new invasions and for reducing long-term economic impact. A cohesive program was not designed at the time hydrilla was introduced into the U.S. and **now more than $25 million is spent annually to control this single weed species.**

- Invasive aquatic weeds:
    - increase the risk of flood damage,
    - reduce the habitat value of waters for fish and wildlife,
    - decrease property values for shoreline landowners,
    - disrupt the generation of hydropower,
    - obstruct commercial and recreational navigation, and

- further exacerbates existing recovery efforts of endangered species and may bring other species to the brink of endangerment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plant Control program emphasizes integrated, cost-effective and science-based approaches to invasive aquatic plant management. Removal of funding for the Aquatic Plant Control program will hinder the continuation of decades of valuable research and slow the development of new control technologies. Without dedicated funding, the Corps of Engineers as well as other federal and state aquatic plant control operations will lack long-term management solutions to provide consistent and environmentally sustainable aquatic weed control. Without the Aquatic Plant Control program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal and state water resource agencies lack the ability to effectively meet today and tomorrow's challenges in aquatic and wetland invasive plant management and aquatic ecosystem restoration. Due to limited resources and the need to serve immediate local public water needs, state and local government programs lack the long-range goals necessary to protect and enhance national environmental and water resources missions now being provided by the Aquatic Plant Control program.

We believe that continued and adequate funding support for the Aquatic Plant Control program, particularly for **research and management** of invasive aquatic weeds is critical for our nation's water resource security. We are aware that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has many competing fiscal needs. However, we also recognize that as the largest federal provider of water-based recreation, hydropower, navigation, and flood control in the nation, **the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has an unprecedented responsibility to preserve and protect our nation's water resources**.

Within the Aquatic Plant Control program, funding for research has ranged from **$5 to $7 million** from 2018 to 2024**.** That research has returned its value hundreds of times over in the control of aquatic invasive weeds and plant growths and the restoration of our aquatic resources. The value of research and technology transfer gained from such endeavors far outweigh the cost of maintaining this small but **nationally significant research program.** Not having funding for the Aquatic Plant Control program in FY 2025 has jeopardized the continuation of ongoing research and development of new and improved technologies to protect our nation's aquatic resources. The APMS, our affiliate chapters, Florida APMS, MidSouth APMS, South Carolina APMS, Midwest APMS, Northeast APMS, Texas APMS, and Western APMS, along with the Weed Science Society of America, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation, and North American Lake Management Society stand ready to work with you and answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jeremy Slade
Past President
Aquatic Plant Management Society

Dr. Hilary Sandler
President
Weed Science Society of America

Mr. Jason Cull
President
Florida Aquatic Plant Management Society

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Mr. Carlton Layne
Executive Director
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cc: Lt. Gen. Butch Graham, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Mr. Lee Forsgren: Acting ASA(CW)

Ms. Stacey Brown: Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Management and Budget

House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee

Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee