

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EARLY DETECTION LEADS TO COORDINATED RAPID RESPONSE OF INVASIVE WATER CHESTNUT IN THE CHAUTAUQUA LAKE OUTLET

Water Chestnut has been identified and removed for the second straight year in the Chautauqua Lake outlet. Water Chestnut is an aggressive aquatic invasive species that, if left unchecked, could negatively impact the health and usability of Chautauqua Lake by forming large, impenetrable mats of fast-growing plants that alter water chemistry and clarity, impair native species growth, and hinder boating, fishing, and swimming. This plant can be identified by its small triangularly shaped leaves, which are between 2 and 4 centimeters wide that form a rosette on the surface of the water. Water Chestnut plants form small white flowers in July, which persist throughout the summer. Their seeds or nutlets are generally 3 cm in length and contain 4 sharp barbs. These nutlets can be painful to step on and can cling to a variety of animals, including waterfowl, which can spread this species from waterbody to waterbody. According to the *Water Chestnut: An Exotic Invasive Aquatic Plant* Fact Sheet published by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, each seed can be viable for up to 12 years and has the potential to produce 10 to 15 plants, which, in turn, can produce up to 20 seeds each. These plants tend to grow amongst the vast expanse of native water lily species in the Chautauqua Lake outlet and are often difficult to detect.

In 2019, Western New York (WNY) Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History (RTPI), and the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance located and removed 13 Water Chestnut plants from the Chautauqua Lake outlet. Prior to that, the last reported detection and removal of Water Chestnut from the outlet was in 2015. Most of these plants were located just downstream of Carlson's Boat Livery on the descending left bank. On 7/1/20 the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy (CWC) logged the first Chautauqua Lake Water Chestnut detection of the year. Staff from the CWC pulled and removed 1 Water Chestnut plant from a location near the Lawson Boat and Motor Marina. On 7/31/20 RTPI hosted a Citizen Science Volunteer Field Training event at Lucille Ball Memorial Park. During this event staff from RTPI and the Alliance located and removed approximately 10 Water Chestnut plants from the outlet near the first bend south of Carlson's Boat Livery. This detection point was in close proximity to prior detection points from 2015 and 2019. Staff from RTPI and CWC performed a follow-up survey on 8/7/20 where they located a large stand of Water Chestnut plants that contained more than 100 plants. As a result, RTPI hosted a volunteer early detection and rapid response survey on 8/13/20, which launched at the Lucille Ball Memorial Park. Staff from RTPI, CWC, Audubon Community Nature Center (ACNC), Alliance, WNY PRISM, and Evergreen Outfitters along with members of the public participated in this collaborative unified effort to remove a large stand of this invasive species. The team removed a substantial amount of plants (greater than 100), which filled a 5-foot-long bed of a mid-size pickup truck.

In addition to leading on-water surveys, RTPI hosts regular Chautauqua Lake aquatic invasive species educational programs during the summer months. These programs focus on the invasive plants currently found in Chautauqua Lake, and those that are known from elsewhere in the region and can arrive here at any time. These programs are offered free of charge and are open to the public. The next Citizen Science survey will be conducted on August 28th at 1:00 PM at Lucille Ball Memorial Park in Celoron. For information about RTPI's Chautauqua Aquatic Invasive Species (CHQ AIS) Program, please visit <https://rtpi.org/what-are-these-weeds/> or contact Jonathan Townsend, RTPI's Manager of Conservation and Restoration at JTownsend@rtpi.org.

The Audubon Community Nature Center is conducting a Water Chestnut Rapid Response Removal Program in 2020, which complements the early detection efforts led by RTPI and is focused on assisting property owners within the Chautauqua

Lake watershed with Water Chestnut removal. If you live within the Chautauqua Lake watershed and you encounter a population of Water Chestnut, please contact info@audubonnc.org with the subject line “WC Rapid Removal Response Request”.

Funding for RTPi’s Chautauqua Aquatic Invasive Species Program and the Audubon’s Water Chestnut Rapid Response Removal Program is provided through the Alliance’s 2020 Consolidated Local Funding Grant program, which is generously supported by the Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation, the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation, and The Lenna Foundation.

Early detection and rapid response programs like the ones led by RTPi and ACNC are critically important for the early detection and removal of priority aquatic invasive species such as Water Chestnut prior to their establishment in Chautauqua Lake. They work in concert with ongoing prevention-focused programs such as the Watercraft Steward programs led by the Chautauqua Lake Association, WNYPRISM, and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. The Alliance would like to thank those who have been involved in the recent early detection and rapid response events and encourages members of the public to be vigilant for Water Chestnut as they recreate within Chautauqua Lake and its watershed. If you encounter Water Chestnut please contact RTPi (JTownsend@rtpi.org), ACNC (info@audubonnc.org), WNY PRISM (wnyprism@buffalostate.edu), or the Alliance (twest@chautauquaalliance.org). You can also report invasive species detections to iMapInvasives, which is an online invasive species reporting platform that is used by 6 states, including New York and Pennsylvania at <https://www.nyimapinvasives.org/>.

For more information regarding these programs or the Alliance, please contact Vince Horrigan at (716) 661-8918.



Photo 1. Photo of the volunteers that helped remove a large population of Water Chestnut in the Chautauqua Lake outlet on 8/13/20. Source: Alliance



Photo 2. Truck bed full of Water Chestnut plants pulled from the Chautauqua Lake outlet on 8/13/20. Source: RTPi



Photo 3. Water Chestnut nutlet from a Water Chestnut plant removed from the Chautauqua Lake outlet on 8/13/20. Source: Alliance



Photo 4. ACNC’s Water Chestnut Rapid Response Removal team pulling Water Chestnut plants from the Chautauqua Lake outlet on 8/13/20. Source: RTPi