



Chautauqua Current No. 44

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance, Inc.

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Figure 1. Pictured above, a crane places a new plant harvester purchased by Chautauqua County onto a trailer at the Chautauqua Lake Association shop in Lakewood. Photo by Jay Young.

Lake Management Enters Home Stretch, 2025 Planning Underway

By Jay Young

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance

While Labor Day traditionally signals the winding down of our yearly lake management season, Alliance members are still hard at work caring for the lake and looking ahead to 2025.

The Chautauqua Lake Association announced last week that it was working with one consolidated crew, which included harvesters, shore workers, and Town of Chautauqua Mobitracs. That group was working the east shore below the bridge and heading south to Fluvanna. CLA is hoping to complete one more full loop of the lake before pulling equipment out of the water at the end of September. As of last week around 9.86 million pounds of vegetation had been removed. More updates on that work can be found on CLA's Facebook page.

Plant management has been bolstered by several recent capital equipment purchases. In early August a new Inland Lake Harvester was delivered to the CLA shop in Lakewood. That machine and three other key pieces of equipment were purchased by Chautauqua County using ARPA funding. The county's research boat has already been on the water this year, while a transport vessel and Mobitrac support vessel are expected to be delivered by ILH in the near future. CLA also recently took delivery of

a new forklift; funding for that came from CLA's endowment which was augmented by a grant from the County Occupancy Tax Program via the Alliance. The County also recently funded the purchase of a new Mobitrac and shoreline conveyor that were first deployed last year.

The new research boat, named 'Unity', is supporting the collaborative research being done to address harmful algal blooms. The Jefferson Project, in partnership with Chautauqua Institution, has used the vessel to redeploy vertical profilers to the lake, and to conduct in-water sampling. Thanks to a generous grant by the Sheldon Foundation, seven stream monitoring stations are now gathering data from the lake's tributaries in a major expansion of this program.

The Chautauqua Lake Partnership coordinated three different herbicide treatments in 2024, the first of which took place on April 25. That treatment used Aquathol K to target the early-growing invasive curly-leaf pondweed in areas of Ellery, Bemus Point, Busti, and Lakewood. On June 24 ProcellaCOR EC was applied to areas in Ellery, Ellicott, Lakewood, and North Harmony targeting invasive Eurasian watermilfoil. The herbicide Komeen was applied on July 16 at areas near the Celoron marinas. CLP works alongside the Department of Environmental Conservation, a professional lake manager, and researchers to plan and (when necessary) alter its herbicide treatment plans.

This year CLP secured DEC permits to perform a pilot test on invasive starry stonewort in the south basin, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of different products. However, the algae was not detected in sufficient quantities in pre-treatment surveys, so the treatments did not occur. Other factors, such as levels of algae and dissolved oxygen in the water, are also considered before treatment decisions are made. More information on 2024 work can be found on CLP's website. They once again contracted with scientists from North Carolina State University to perform lakewide surveys of plant communities. That partnership began in 2020, and recently culminated in a new 5-year management plan for lake plants, which can be found on the Alliance website.

On the topic of starry stonewort, the Alliance also continues to work closely with the Towns of North Harmony and Chautauqua, the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, and DEC to manage the algae. Both of the towns have secured state invasive species grants to perform diver-assisted suction harvesting. Permitting for the project is ongoing, and we are hopeful that diver removal of the algae can begin in the next few months as starry stonewort reaches the height of its growing season. Because it is an emerging invasive species and there is no silver bullet for removal, different management tactics are being pursued by several of our members.

CWC also addresses other problem plants over the course of the season via its invasive species early detection taskforce, which conducts volunteer kayak surveys and hand-pulls plants such as water chestnut. Their work in 2024 also includes the Lakescapes outreach program, the watershed technical assistance program, and seeking stormwater improvements on their Goose Creek preserve.

The Alliance is once again soliciting proposals from our member organizations for 2025 lake and watershed projects. In the fall members outline the work they would like to do in the coming year, and those applications are assessed by the Alliance Board before funding decisions are made. The process encourages grantees to report challenges and new findings in order to capitalize on successes, identify new partnerships, and adapt to lessons learned. Having a coordinated funding framework for these lake and watershed programs is made possible by the generosity of our local charitable foundations and the county.