



**“Help—there’s a monster growing in our lake!”**

**Top 5 things you need to do if a lake becomes infested with an aquatic invasive plant**



*While this milfoil monster may be cute, it’s not something you want in your lake or pond.  
(Image source: Skaneateles Lake (NY) Milfoil Eradication Project)*

**Imagine that one of your worst nightmares has come true—your local lake or pond has become infested with variable milfoil, or some other unwanted invasive aquatic plant.** The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has confirmed that there is, indeed, a bad plant—a monster, in fact—growing in your local lake and that something needs to be done about it, before it is ‘too late.’

Your mind may start to swirl—concerns about trying to swim and boat through tangled masses of long spindly weeds, declining lakefront property values, and dealing with the expensive and time consuming challenges of trying to get rid of the unwanted newcomers fill your head. You may be wondering, “Well, what should we do first, and then, what next?”

**Here’s some good news—well, sort-of good news.** Several lake and pond associations have had to deal with invasive aquatic plant infestations over the years since the first variable milfoil infestation was discovered in a New Hampshire lake in the late 1960s. During the past 50 years, many types of invasive plant control methods have been tried in New Hampshire, resulting in different degrees of success and failure. The good news is that biologists have learned a great deal about how to most effectively fight off the spread of invasive plants in New Hampshire waterbodies using a comprehensive and integrated approach at management, and many lake associations have learned what it takes to sustain the battle on the local level.

**Here are the first five things you should do as soon as your local lake or pond has been documented by state biologists as being infested with an invasive aquatic plant:**

**1. NOTIFY:** Notify your community, including all association members, shoreline property owners, groups that use the lake or pond (including fishing groups, campgrounds, marinas, sailing and rowing groups, water-skiing schools, etc.), and owners of all boat launches that an invasive aquatic plant is growing in the waterbody. Provide everyone with information about the specific plant, including what it looks like, where it has been found in the waterbody, and how they can help prevent its spread. (DES and NH LAKES can provide you with brochures and tips on how to prevent spreading.)



**2. PLAN:** Work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to develop a long-term invasive aquatic plant management plan. The plan for your lake might call for: the application herbicides by a licensed applicator to selectively kill the invasive aquatic plants which could make other management techniques easier to conduct; suction harvesting and/or hand pulling performed by certified weed control divers to remove the plants; the installation of barriers on the waterbody bottom to prevent the plants from growing; and, the designation of restricted use areas which discourage boaters from traveling through densely infested areas. The purpose of the long-term management plan is to ensure that there is a strategic, well-organized process that is tailored to best manage the specific invasive species in the waterbody.



**3. SURVEY:** Now that there is an invasive aquatic plant lurking in the waterbody, understand that its main motive is to spread. Therefore, it is critical that a local Weed Watcher Program be established or ramped up—this will help determine what areas of the waterbody are infested and if the infestation spreads. Weed Watchers are trained by DES to survey their waters at least once a month from May through September for the presence of invasive species.



**4. PREVENT:** Although the waterbody is now infested, it is important to establish a Lake Host™ Program or enhance the existing program at the waterbody to prevent additional invasive plants from invading. There's no sense in spending time and money managing an invasive aquatic plant infestation if nothing is being done to prevent additional, and perhaps even worse, invasive plants from coming into the waterbody. In addition, by Lake Hosting at the now infested lake or pond, your lake community will be acting as good neighbor by helping prevent invasive plants from hitchhiking their way out of the lake or pond and into neighboring waterbodies. NH LAKES can help you set up or enhance your Lake Host Program.



**5. FUNDRAISE:** All of the steps listed above take time and most of them cost money—some of them could cost a considerable amount of money. If it doesn't exist already, a lake management fund within your community—either within your association or your municipality—should be established. While DES may be able to help cover most (or all) of cost during the first year of invasive species management activities, the cost will soon become a local responsibility and challenge. Over the years, lake associations and municipalities have come up with many creative and successful ways to raise money to fight off infestations. DES and NH LAKES can provide you with guidance and tips!)



**While NH LAKES and DES are there to help prevent your local lake or pond from becoming infested with an invasive aquatic plant, rest assured that both organizations are able to help if this nightmare becomes a reality.** It is important to know that the majority of the waterbodies that have successfully reduced infestations of invasive aquatic plants are those that have a strong local network of individuals working in partnership with state and other local entities to fight for their return to an invasive-free state.

NH LAKES is the only statewide, member-supported nonprofit organization working to keep New Hampshire's lakes clean and healthy, now and in the future. The organization works with partners, promotes clean water policies and responsible use, and inspires the public to care for our lakes. For information, visit [www.nhlakes.org](http://www.nhlakes.org), email [info@nhlakes.org](mailto:info@nhlakes.org), or call 603.226.0299.

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