

Urgent Multistate Connecticut River Watershed Hydrilla Program and Rapid Response Task Force

FY 2022 Appropriations for Army Corps of Engineers

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Please join Senator Blumenthal in supporting an urgent FY 2022 Appropriations for Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Nuisance Research Program (ANRP) and the Aquatic Plant Control Program (APCP) for *Hydrilla verticillata* control through the creation of a *Multistate Connecticut River Watershed Hydrilla Program and Rapid Response Task Force*.

Hydrilla is the most feared of aquatic invasive plants.

Over the past 5 years, hydrilla has spread exponentially throughout over 65 miles of the Connecticut River from Agawam, Massachusetts to Essex, Connecticut.

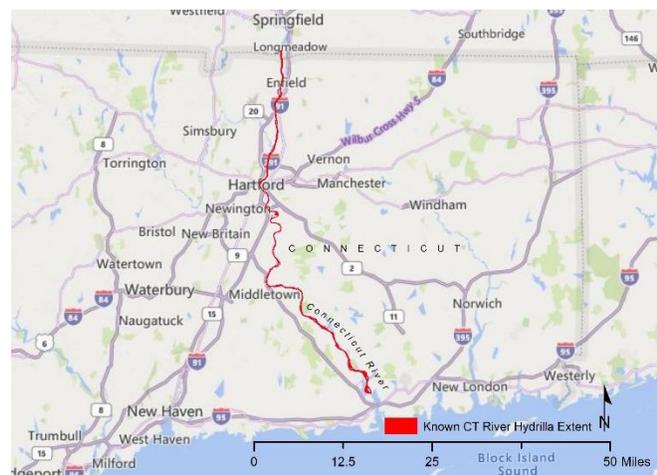
Genetic testing by the University of Wisconsin has identified this hydrilla to be a new genotype not found before in the United States.

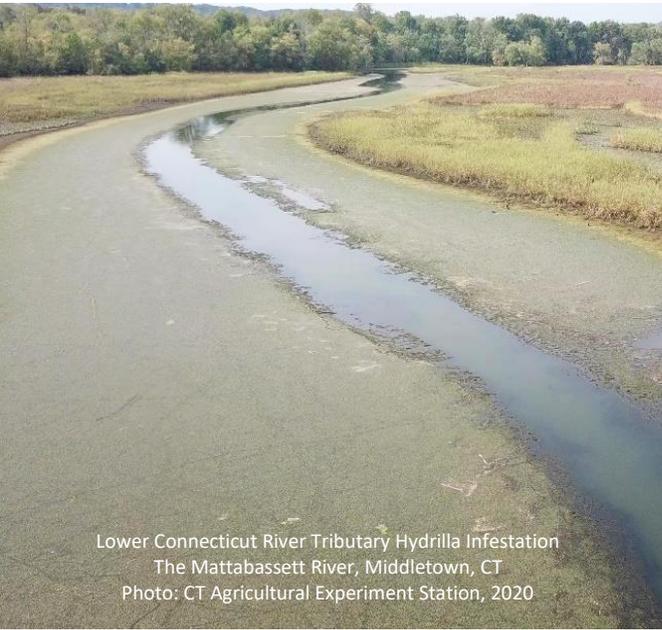
This hydrilla poses a great risk to New England and New York and other east coast states'

- Wetland ecosystems
- Public drinking water supplies, and
- Recreational and tourism industry particularly where recreational boaters visit, including
- Lake Champlain,
- Lake George,
- the Great Lakes, and
- the lakes of New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

Centered in Connecticut, this task force would be led by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Aquatic Invasive Species Program of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), and the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), to

- Create and Implement a strategic Plan of Action to
- Prevent further spread
- Mitigate hydrilla's affects
- Eradicate where feasible
- Monitor to ensure rapid response to future occurrences.





Lower Connecticut River Tributary Hydrilla Infestation
The Mattabassett River, Middletown, CT
Photo: CT Agricultural Experiment Station, 2020

The explosive spread of this aquatic invasive plant intersects a very popular recreational boating and fishing area for boaters from Maine to Florida. There is great concern on the part of aquatic invasive species specialists at the state, federal, and local level of the spread of this unusually aggressive hydrilla from the Connecticut River that flows 410 miles from the Canadian border to Long Island Sound through Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut to other areas of the Northeast and beyond. Immediate action is needed to protect the environmental, economic, and recreational values of the waterways and water bodies of the Northeast.

The requested resources allow for aggressive action that will avoid the need for millions of dollars to eradicate hydrilla in many other waterways throughout New England and New York if the Connecticut River infestation is not controlled.

Appropriations of \$25,000,000 for each of at least 4 years for the ANRP and the APCR are being requested for Hydrilla control in the Connecticut River watershed. Although more study of associated costs will be done as part of the planning process this is a recent cost estimate for treatment of the entire known affected area and would more than likely need to be sustained for a number of summer seasons, with monitoring of the river as a regular continuing work program. Each year's funding would be determined based on the past year's mitigation and eradication results. Early success may reduce the need for significant future outlays of federal funding. Please join the Senator to urge appropriations of \$25 million for the Aquatic Nuisance Research Program (ANRP) and the Aquatic Plant Control Program (APCP) in the FY 2022 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, with the following report language:

Hydrilla verticillata --The Conferees recognize the importance of the work conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers to combat the serious threat of Aquatic Invasive Species and in particular *Hydrilla verticillata* and provide \$25,000,000 for each of at least 4 years for the Aquatic Nuisance Research Program (ANRP) and the Aquatic Plant Control Program (APCP) for Hydrilla control in the Connecticut River watershed. Funding should be used to create a Connecticut River Hydrilla Program and rapid response task force that would cover the multistate watershed. Centered in Connecticut, this task force should fund and be led by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Aquatic Invasive Species Program of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, and the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for the creation of a plan, and implementation of mitigation and eradication of Hydrilla from the Connecticut River watershed. Each year's funding may be determined based on the past year's mitigation and eradication results with the addition of the monitoring and control of Hydrilla in the Connecticut River and its watershed as a regular continuing work program.

Connecticut support to date includes:

CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection | CT Agricultural Experiment Station | RiverCOG and its municipalities
CT Marine Trades Association | CT Sea Grant | CT RC&D | Save the Sound | CT River Conservancy | Rivers Alliance | Wethersfield
CT River Coastal Conservation District | CT Audubon | CT River Gateway Commission | Jonah Center | Friends of Whalebone Cove