

Community Corner

## The State Fights Invasive Aquatic Plants In The CT River

The DEEP today announced the recipients of the inaugural round of grant funding through the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant Program.

By Karena Garrity, Patch Staff  
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ESSEX, CT — A press release put out by the office of Senator Norm Needleman included the following information;



State Senator Norm Needleman (D-Essex) today joined State Senator Christine Cohen (D-Guilford), Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Katie Dykes to welcome state grants that will represent significant investment in the fight against invasive aquatic plants, which can wreak havoc on natural wildlife as well as water safety and recreation ability. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection today announced the recipients of the inaugural round of grant funding through the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant Program, with a total of \$360,000 going to 21 projects to reduce impacts of aquatic invasive species on inland waters in Connecticut.

"In recent years, invasive aquatic species have caused significant issues in many of our state's natural waters," said Sen. Needleman. "They can clog lakes and ponds and harm natural wildlife, also impacting the usability and recreation opportunities available to the public. When many ponds and lakes serve as local recreational draws, they can even negatively impact local economies. I welcome this new funding for programs that aim to fight these scourges head-on, cleaning up our rivers, lakes and ponds. Our state's investment in these programs to support safe, clean waters will pay strong dividends for fish, birds, plants and, of course, people across Connecticut."

Among the projects receiving grant funding are two from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station valued at a combined \$36,000, respectively to support the CAES Aquatic Plant Program and to support education and outreach for Connecticut's invasive aquatic plant, clam and mussel identification guide. The Connecticut River Conservancy will receive \$45,505 to create a management plan for Hydrilla, an invasive species, and to coordinate hand removal of water chestnuts in the Connecticut River watershed.

Towns in the 33rd District including East Hampton, Lyme and Old Lyme have experienced growth of invasive weeds and algae in their waterways and bodies of water in recent years, as has the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River flows through and directly impacts nearly every municipality in the 33rd District.

The Aquatic Invasive Species Grant Program was made possible in 2019 when the Connecticut General Assembly voted on a bipartisan basis to create a \$5 Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp fee (Public Act 19-190) for all registered boats using Connecticut waters to fund the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation Account.

The funds must be used for one of three purposes:

- Programs to eradicate aquatic invasive species and cyanobacteria blooms;
- Education and public outreach programs about protecting and preserving state lakes, rivers, and ponds;
- Grants to state and municipal agencies and nonprofit organizations to conduct research and provide education on managing state lakes, rivers, and ponds.

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For this first round of funding, DEEP had a total of \$360,000 to award for eligible control, research and education and outreach projects. The maximum grant award was \$50,000. Matching funds were required and had to equal or exceed 25% of the total amount of funding received from DEEP under this grant program.

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