

Be a Pond Watcher

As part of the Department of Environmental Protection grant application, Each fall Mike Gately asks volunteer pond watchers on Sand and Hancock Ponds to report their total hours over the summer on the water looking out for invasive species.

This information is very helpful to him when completing the end of year report to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for our milfoil grant.

The grant application asks us to report volunteer hours by pond watchers, who boat, canoe, or kayak looking for anything out of the ordinary. Last year Mike had 15 pond watchers who spent 200 volunteer hours on the water.

Mike Reports: “Jesse Dubin continues to be a great resource. Two of the latest volunteers are Susan Lyons and Paula Hill. Paula found one plant in Sand Pond that had not been seen in lakes previously. Fortunately, it was not invasive, but interesting nonetheless, as historically this plant has been found in farmers fields, not on the bottom of a lake.

I encourage all lake residents to regularly monitor the lakes in front of their camps or when out boating, and to let him know if anything looks out of place.”

How to be a Pond Watcher

Lake Stewards of Maine has many videos and information on their website, lakestewardsofmaine.org, to help folks learn about invasive plants and what to look for. You don't need to be an expert, just learn to spot anything out of the ordinary. There are a lot of ways to get information.

You can print out a chart of Maine's 11 Most Unwanted Invasive Aquatic Plants from the Lake Stewards website. Look under Monitoring/Invasive Aquatic Species/Invasives Program Background.

You can also download an app designed by Lake Stewards, called Maine Aquatic Phenomena, for your phone, iPad, or laptop, for \$2.99, from the

Apple Store or Google Play Store. It's a field guide to Maine's flora and fauna, with a special section on Aquatic Invaders, including color photos and descriptions of invasive species.

If you want to go further, you can explore the Lake Stewards volunteer training program. Click on Volunteer Resources/ Invasive Plant Patrol Monitors/ Training and Certification. They offer a free six-hour Invasive Plant Patrol Workshop to become a Certified Plant Patroller.

What to Do If You Spot Something Suspicious

Lake Stewards of Maine has a site for Reporting Suspicious Aquatic Species that will guide you on what to do if you see a plant that you think is an invasive species. Click on Monitoring/Invasive Aquatic Species/Reporting Suspicious Aquatic Species.

The site includes a link to an aquatic phenomena photo submission form, where you can send a photo to Lake Stewards for identification.

There are also detailed instructions on how to safely remove a sample of the plant for a readable digital photo. Lake Stewards emphasizes:

“Be very careful when collecting a plant specimen. Fragmentation could result in an invasive plant spreading to other areas of the lake. DO NOT attempt to pull the plant out by its roots. (This is very important!)

“When collecting samples from a live lake plant, please be sure not to remove the whole plant. Snip off one or two pieces of healthy stem from the plant (roughly 8 to 12 inches long) including as many different features as you can (flowers, fruits, leaves, etc.). For rooted floating leaves, be sure to include as much of the stem as possible.

“Keep the specimen in water, in a cool place such as a refrigerator. This will keep it fresh until you are ready to photograph or ship.”

You can also mark the spot where you found the suspicious plant with a weighted buoy made from a common bleach bottle weighted with a brick.