

THIS INVASIVE NUISANCE
AQUATIC PLANT DOMINATES
LAKE GEORGE

EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL

Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM, *Myriophyllum spicatum*) is a submerged aquatic perennial that is considered an invasive plant. It was first found within Lake George in 1985. EWM grows rapidly and can spread easily from one area to another. It forms dense beds that can negatively impact the environment and economy of an area. EWM is native to Europe, Asia and northern Africa. It was first introduced into North America in the early 1900s. EWM was introduced from discarded ballast in ships and from the release of aquarium plants, where it was used as an ornamental.

EWM has 3-6 whorled feathery leaves (with 4 leaves most common) that are spaced 1-3 centimeters on the stem. The leaves typically have 12 pairs of leaflets on each leaf, but this varies. The tips of the leaves are square with a snapped-off appearance. EWM can grow to 20 feet in length and in water depths



Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) has infested Lake George since the 1980s. This nuisance invasive aquatic plant chokes out native aquatic plants and disrupts recreational activities.

of 30 feet or more. EWM does not rely on seeds for reproduction; the seeds germinate poorly under natural conditions. EWM propagates by fragmentation and root division (runners that creep along the lake bed). The fragments are easily transported from lake to lake by boats, motors, trailers, bilges, live wells, and bait buckets and are easily spread throughout a lake by boats, natural wave action and currents. EWM can live out of water for weeks if kept moist. Any disturbance to the lakebed in the littoral zone (shallow shoreline areas), such

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Watermilfoil

LAKE GEORGE FACT SHEET

as dredging, or removal of native plants, creates an opportunity for EWM to infest or expand.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish EWM from native milfoil species. All milfoils are perennials that propagate from root division, stem fragmentation, and seeds. At the end of the growing season some plants die back to its rootstalk and others overwinter intact. There are five native milfoils that can be found in New York State, some of which hybridize with other milfoil species. This makes positive identification of the various species difficult at times.

There are a variety of methods used for the control of EWM. Herbicides will suppress growth, but kill fish, cause algal blooms, contaminate drinking water, and kills native plants. Mechanical harvesting, barriers and other physical control techniques have short-term localized reductions, but they do need to be monitored long term. Biological methods such as the introduction of species that will feed primarily on EWM such as grass carp or the weevil have been somewhat effective in other bodies of water; however caution must be taken in introducing any non-native species that may have an effect on the lake. Hand harvesting EWM



EWM has been successfully controlled in other lakes in the northeast USA through hand harvesting and use of benthic barriers on the lake bottom.

with divers and use of benthic barriers to cover plants on the lake bottom have been successful in other lakes and are being used in Lake George. Prevention of the spread of EWM is critical. Here are the best methods to control its spread:

- Avoid boating, paddling, or swimming through dense plant beds of EWM in Lake George; and,
- When transporting a boat, trailer, or diving gear to Lake George, inspect and remove all clinging plants from watercraft, gear and equipment. Perform this same inspection when removing a boat from Lake George so that EWM is not transported to other lakes.

We need your help to protect Lake George from invasive species.

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