



P.O. Box 14, Salisbury, Vermont 05769

TO: House Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife
FROM: Jeff Benton; Legislative Chair
DATE: April 4, 2017
RE: S.75; An Act relating to Aquatic Nuisance

We appreciate the House committee considering S.75. The Lake Dunmore Fern Lake Association (LDFLA) weighed in on the bill in the Senate and supported the bill. Our Association has worked diligently to address and control the growing problem of Eurasian Milfoil.

The LDFLA has been very proactive in creating a program to control the spread of milfoil. Starting in 1989, the milfoil program consisted of volunteer "pullers", who hand pulled and removed plants from Lake Dunmore and Fern Lake. As milfoil expanded throughout the lake, so did the program, growing in 1994 to employ two divers to pull the plants from June through August, and again in 1999 to five divers. These methods initially proved very effective, so much so, that in 2004, the association received the Environment Merit Award from the state of Vermont for their control of Eurasian Milfoil in an environmentally friendly way (i.e. non-chemical control).

The "inspectors" (greeters in our case) should determine if an individual boat needs to be washed. Any plan calling for all boats to be washed is not sustainable without robust funding. The LDFLA has had a "greeter" program for at least 5 years; the program is challenged because not every daylight hour can be covered and even then, boaters can enter or leave the lake after dark. Additionally, interactions with some boaters are difficult. Often these interactions can be adversarial if boaters don't want to participate or are in a hurry.

LDFLA has considered installing a "boat wash" station. However, we are limited not only by resources but also by the absence of good a location. Our two lakes have three public and several private boat launches. It would be impossible to staff and fund such a program. We believe that encouraging Associations to use best management practices and provide training "tools" is imperative; and there remains a need for increased AIS control grant funding. Over the last 5 years, the collective grant requests for AIS control have been about \$1.5 million. The average funding has been about \$500,000. Simply stated, we are losing the battle.

S.75 as passed by the Senate will:

- Increase education, signage and public outreach
- Increase compliance with the laws regarding the transport of aquatic plants and aquatic nuisance species
- Enable rapid response to new growth with bottom barriers

Most of all, we believe that S.75 is a good step forward to increasing awareness around aquatic species and communication with the Agency of Natural Resources and lake associations.