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March 02, 2017

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the committee, Thank you for this opportunity.

I am Christine Cano from E. Montpelier, but I spend my summers at Shadow Lake in Glover where I volunteer as I a director of our Lake Association and Chair our Milfoil Committee. I am also a director of the Federation of VT Lakes and Ponds but I am here representing myself, as a layperson in support of this bill because I am a proponent for State-wide mandatory boat washing to protect our water bodies from aquatic invasive species.

We all here understand the function of water ecosystems are significantly altered as AIS destroys water quality. Trailered watercraft are the prime dispersal mechanisms most often cited for inter lake transport of AIS. The decontamination of boats and their related equipment exposed to AIS infested water sources is crucial to stopping the spread to un-invaded waterbodies. Draining water from motors, live wells, and bilges is another practice that can reduce the threat of AIS.

In 2003, a boat wash station was established at Shadow Lake and located in the parking area of the State Fishing Access as a proactive effort to prevent the introduction of AIS. So began an important partnership between The Shadow Lake Association with the Town of Glover and the State of VT.

Our boat wash was the first, and until last year, the only hot water high-pressure watercraft decontamination station operating in Vermont and is staffed by greeters who are a vital component to the success of our boat washing operation. Our Greeters attend training workshops and become friendly stewards of the lake who welcome and educate visiting lake-users about AIS and the steps that can be taken to prevent the spread (motto: 'Clean, Drain & Dry'), while offering assistance with courtesy watercraft inspections and free boat washes to stop AIS introductions

The one-of-a-kind assembly of our boat wash station up-cycles an old horse trailer rebuilt to house our hot water tank and water pump. The trailer also serves as a cozy shelter for our Greeter's while on duty, complete with a telephone, desk top, data collection materials and educational literature hand outs for lake-users on the importance of AIS spread prevention.

We use a power wash with 140 degree hot water for a minimum of 10 seconds to effectively decontaminate all the high risk areas of trailered motor boats and non-motorized vessels. Our protocol is to ask for anchors and ropes to be placed in a tub of hot water to wash away sediment to reduce the chance of spiny water flea eggs being transported. We also ask if we can flush live wells and remind boaters to pull plugs and drain over the gravel bed at our station.

The inspection often takes place while we are washing and the process takes about 5-10 minutes, with little inconvenience to boaters as they launch or retrieve their watercraft.

We typically operate our station from Memorial Day thru Labor Day, open 7 days a week, 6am to 6pm, with extended hours during the busy times of high summer and on into the weekends in September when fishing boats are still accessing the lake. We have found most visitors receptive to washing.

At the close of the 2015 season, our Greeter staff interacted with a total of 422 watercraft, boaters reported having previously come from 57 unique water bodies, 7 states and Quebec. 2 boats were found to be carrying aquatic plant material which was promptly removed by our greeters and one motor boat coming directly from Lake Champlain steadfastly refused inspection or washing and entered Shadow because "they didn't have the time" and we end up fighting a loosing battle!

This one careless action may have exposed Shadow to zebra mussels, spiny water flea and a host of other AIS. Spiny water flea prefer cold, and open waters, but can persist in a wide range of lentic conditions and would be at home in Shadow Lake. I would like to see specific language in VT legislation against the transport of Spiny water flea.

Last year the number of boats entering Shadow increased. Boats came from 63 different waterbodies, some known to have AIS, but luckily only 1 motorboat refused to be washed. That is 1 boat too many!

Despite all our dedicated boat washing efforts since 2003, sadly in 2011, a boat Greeter found milfoil tangled in discarded fishing line at the access, the State was notified and soon confirmed approximately 10,000 square feet of a dense colony of milfoil was in a Cove of Shadow.

It took almost 2 months of time to pass thru the State permitting procedures before we could finally move to install the necessary benthic barrier mats to contain the largest stand of milfoil. During that waiting period I repeatedly walked that Cove's shoreline to collect and remove the many long milfoil stem fragments washing up regularly on the shore so they would not wash back into the lake and root and spread. I submit, we need a faster permitting process for benthic barriers and faster deployment. Which is another reason I support this bill.

Having milfoil is a Crisis and every moment bogged down in regulatory requirements and long procedure only contributes to the infestations ability to aggressively spread to other areas of a waterbody, as it did at Shadow.

Over the last 5 years, I have spearheaded the campaign to control the milfoil at Shadow, both in the war room planning our the best management practices and as infantry with boots to the ground, snorkeling and pulling out bags full of milfoil from the lake. As a trained VIP, I have snorkeled the entire lake shore zone in search of milfoil and other AIS, mapping the milfoil spread as sites were found. Throughout each summer I supervise 2 back to back, lake-wide diver-assisted surveys to search for milfoil because early detection is key to protecting Lakes.

The Shadow Lake map before you was created by Ann Bove incorporating my lake surveys of milfoil sites. Thank you Ann, for all your aquatic expertise you have shared with me.

Since the first site of milfoil was found in 2011, to date, a total of 22 sites have spread around Shadow. Our dedicated team has carefully monitored and successfully managed all the sites around the lake. By last seasons end, after again performing 2 lake surveys, we are encouraged to have only found a few, relatively small milfoil plants, but this is not the usual outcome when milfoil has invaded. We all know of the horrors of Lake Bomoseen and any other inland lakes are also struggling to control AIS infestations

Monitoring a lake's shoreline is time consuming and labor intensive while we also have to go back and forth across the lake to check on the many known sites of milfoil. Reflecting back on our control efforts, if we had a permit extension, like the one proposed in this bill to be able to quickly lay down a small mat over a new patch of milfoil it would of made our rapid-response management easier and more successful much sooner!

I understand the push-back from the ANR, Yes, the State owns the water; the land underneath it; and is responsible for the quality of our lakes, but it is the lake groups statewide, who are most engaged in the battle to control milfoil infestations and the burden falls upon them to cover the high expense and do the majority of the work for public good.

Several of our milfoil sites had problematic conditions and substrates very conducive for milfoil regrowth and the use of a small 7X7 foot mat would of quickly contained all growth so we could concentrate on other areas of spread. No director at Shadow would be laying down mats without careful consideration and follow through communication with the State. The initial mat permit includes the requirement that a lake group, as part of the contract, is to regularly inspect the mats and submit a maintenance report that includes any mat locations as well as other pertinent criteria.

My team employs an objective management approach in evaluating how best to control each milfoil site discovered, with the least interference with lake activities and the natural environment. In choosing what actions should be taken at a given site, we assess:

- location, vigor, size and number of plants,
- current and potential range of infestation,
- lake depth, water current,
- type of substrate condition,
- sunlight penetration level,
- recreation accessibility,
- how brittle the plants are and likelihood of rapid milfoil dispersal

From my experience, battling milfoil is a **push the red button emergency.** You have to move rapidly, hit it fast and hit it hard, and stay on top of it, for any chance of control. When invasive species are detected soon after introduction, before they have had a chance to become well established, they can often be managed more effectively and, in some cases, even be eradicated.

Preventing the spread of AIS through boat washing along with vigilant lake monitoring for early detection and having a strong rapid response to infestations (to include: the ability to immediately lay down mats to contain milfoil), are the most environmentally sound and cost effective methods for battling aquatic hitchhikers.

The State needs to accelerate its work to help save our waters. Unfortunately, VTANR is underfunded, understaffed and under pressure from all the other lakes and ponds overwhelmed with similar milfoil and other AIS infestations.

Members of the committee I urge you all to please stand firm and work toward a compromise that will support Lake Associations that are providing for robust milfoil management to preserve our waters so no more lakes and ponds fall to Milfoil and end up clogged by nasty weeds and lost vital habitat. As more and more state waterbodies fall, especially to milfoil, and new AIS on the horizon, at this stage of the fight, taking No action is absolutely Unacceptable!

I was born in VT, my family has owned northern VT lake front for over 85 years. I grew up enjoying resplendent swimming and my Grandfather's & father's mounted trophy trouts are a treasured reminder of protecting and preserving healthy lake habitat. Future generations should have the chance to enjoy clean water as I have.

I respectfully thank you.