

## “This is Why We CBI”

CBI is the acronym for Courtesy Boat Inspections, a program that is the State of Maine’s first line of defense in preventing invasive aquatic plants from entering bodies of water. The Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed’s (Friends) CBI program is currently in its thirteenth year, employs over 20 area residents, and accounts for over 10% of Maine’s boat inspections every year. The following story is a recent reminder of the success of this program, and of why we should all check our boats before they float.

On Friday, July 3, 2015, Sam Onion was on duty at the Wilson Pond Public Boat Launch in North Monmouth. During a routine boat inspection, Sam found an object between the boat and the trailer. Not sure whether the object was a plant or fibers from the trailer’s carpet-like covering, Sam looked at the object more closely after the boat had launched and the boaters were on their way. Having been through plant identification training for his work on the Friends’ Plant Survey team, Sam immediately recognized the plant’s feather shaped divided leaves and the leaves’ whorled attachment to the stem, which are both clear indicators of milfoil. The Friends’ Plant Survey Coordinator Shannon Power’s assessment of the plant’s identification was confirmed by staff of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s Invasive Aquatic Plant Program. The plant fragment that had almost made its way into Wilson Pond was Eurasian Milfoil.



Eurasian Milfoil is non-native invasive milfoil, one of eight different milfoils found in the state of Maine, six of which are native and considered non-invasive. Variable-leaf milfoil is one of the non-native invasive milfoils and the State of Maine’s most prevalent aquatic invasive, located in 39 water bodies, five of which are in the Cobbossee Watershed. While much less formidable



looking than Variable-leaf Milfoil, Eurasian Milfoil is more feared as an invasive, as it is known to take over an ecosystem much faster than the Variable Leaf. Currently, only one water body in the state is known to be infested with Eurasian Milfoil - Pleasant Hill Pond near Portland.

So, where did the fragment that almost made it into Wilson Pond originate? Inspection protocol includes asking boaters to provide the last body of water in which their boat was located. The boat entering Wilson Pond on July 3 was last located in the Mystic River in Massachusetts. Follow-up research shows that the Mystic River not only has Eurasian Milfoil, but also includes infestations of Variable-leaf Milfoil, Water Chestnut and Common Reed, all invasive plants. Public attitude towards invasive aquatic plants is sometimes more *lassiez-faire* in other states than in Maine. With 6,000 lakes and ponds, and only 43 with known infestations of aquatic plants, as well as a robust tourism industry that depends upon pristine natural resources, Maine has everything to lose if we are not diligent in protecting our lakes against these invasive species.

The catch on Wilson Pond proves that the Courtesy Boat Inspection program does work. But what happens when inspectors are not on duty? The most critical part of the program is not actually the inspector doing the work, but the message that is getting to our resident and visiting boaters; it is crucial to check your vessel for hitchhiking plants every time, before you enter a water body and when you leave a water body, if not to protect yourself from the potential of receiving a hefty fine for transporting plants, then for the protection of the lakes, ponds and streams that we all enjoy.

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