

# Midcoast Conservancy

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## 2015 DAMARISCOTTA LAKE STATUS UPDATE

Invasive Plants: The invasive plant Hydrilla (the most aggressive in North America) remains present in two locations in Damariscotta Lake, in **Davis Stream** and **Cranberry Cove** (Hemlock Park Drive), both in Jefferson. The Cranberry Cove infestation was discovered in 2009, while the Davis Stream infestation was discovered in 2011. Annual surveys for all invasive plants were conducted by trained DLWA staff and volunteers and we cover over 50% of the lake's entire shoreline.



Water Quality: DLWA is the only organization conducting routine testing of the water quality on Damariscotta Lake. Bi-weekly testing of dissolved oxygen and clarity indicate water quality is "stable." However, annual testing of harmful phosphorus and other indicators show the lake is also at risk of algae blooms especially in the South Arm/Damariscotta Mills area, often exceeding 50 ppb. Isolated pockets of algae were present in 2015. In addition extremely high levels of fecal coliform were identified at the Damariscotta Mills swimming area on the Nobleboro/Newcastle town line.



## HYDRILLA UPDATE

Davis Stream: Since removing the Surface Use Restriction for the 2014 season, Hydrilla plants have not been found in the Stream during weekly surveys from June to October. However, dense vegetation makes surveys difficult. The last time plants were found and removed from this site was in 2013.

Cranberry Cove: DLWA, with assistance from Camp Kieve-Wavus and Maine DEP, installed a new barrier in this cove in 2014 to better control the constant Hydrilla growth. This barrier has been effective in reducing plant growth. However Hydrilla is persistent and continues to grow at reduced numbers inside the quarantined cove. Approximately 20 plants were found and removed during bi-monthly surveys from June to October. Truck loads were removed the first year it was found (2009).

## PARTNERS & FUNDING

Recognizing the current threats to the lake and the significant contribution of lakefront properties to the tax base for the area, DLWA and its successor **Midcoast Conservancy** is seeking \$3,000 from each municipality bordering Damariscotta Lake (Jefferson, Newcastle and Nobleboro) to assist with expenses associated with keeping the lake clear of invasive plants, minimizing polluting phosphorus and testing for healthy swimming areas. In addition, each year we apply for and receive competitive

grants and technical support from the Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection. This funding only partially supports our work controlling Hydrilla on Damariscotta Lake (approximately \$3,000 annually). One condition of this award is that we maintain a viable Courtesy Boat Inspection program to keep invasive plants from spreading to and from Damariscotta Lake. Midcoast Conservancy will continue operating this program on weekends at the state boat launch on Bunker Hill Road in Jefferson (May to September).

## OUTLOOK FOR 2016

Hydrilla: We plan to continue being the leader in the fight against Hydrilla in 2016 and beyond by using our staff and volunteers to survey much of Damariscotta Lake for invasive plants and conduct weekly surveys in Davis Stream with a sharp eye for any plants which can still resurrect even after years of being dormant.

**Surveys at Cranberry Cove will increase** from weekly to bi-weekly to ensure any plants are discovered early so they do not deposit more seeds. We will also continually monitor and manage all devices in place (e.g. bottom barrier, rip rap etc.) that help control the growth of Hydrilla.



Reducing Pollution: Large scale algae blooms caused by too many nutrients and soil flowing into the water can cause fish kills, unpleasant odor and generally adversely impact property values. Additional funding is needed to continue our 2015 pilot program designed to provide landowners with technical advice and support for reducing erosion and the pollution that goes with it. Fifteen projects were completed in 2015 but need is tremendous (50% of all erosion issues were discovered on residential properties in 2014).

Adding Human Health testing: In addition, we plan to add testing for fecal coliform and E-coli in select public swimming areas to protect human health and safety starting with Damariscotta Mills in 2016. When levels exceed Maine water quality standards for bacteria, we will assist in notifying the public and relevant public officials.

## FUTURE AS MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY

On January 1, 2016, DLWA legally merged with three other organizations to become **Midcoast Conservancy**. DLWA staff brings tremendous expertise and with your support we expect to be able to provide even better oversight of the lake's Hydrilla infestations, expand pollution mitigation efforts and create healthier swimming opportunities as we become Midcoast Conservancy.

