

# Watercraft Inspection Steward Program at Lake Sebago Boat Launch

American Canoe Association Camp at Lake Sebago

Final Report - January, 2023



## Overview

The ACA (American Canoe Association) Camp at Lake Sebago hired Mia Shaw, a student from Ramapo College, as an Invasive Species Intern for the 2022 summer season. Our goal was to take the next step to manage the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) through voluntary boat inspections, a lake-wide monitoring effort, and outreach to both the public and the Lake Sebago group camp community.

This internship was done with the support of the other group camps on Lake Sebago (Camp Nawakwa and Appalachian Mountain Club) and with the support of the parks department and Lower Hudson PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management).

Mia served as a Watercraft Inspection Steward, as part of a WISP (Watercraft

Mia Shaw serving as a Watercraft Inspection Steward at the Lake Sebago public boat launch. Photo credit Loren Edelson

Inspection Steward Program), on the public launch of Lake Sebago for the 2022 season from mid-June through the beginning of September. With support and training from Lower Hudson PRISM, Mia engaged with the public through voluntary boat inspections, outreach to the public at the public launch on lake Sebago, and outreach at the ACA group camp at Lake Sebago.

This work increased public awareness and understanding of AIS (and other invasive species), encouraged data collection, promoted best management practices for cleaning boats, and helped prevent the spread of AIS currently in the lake and introduction of new species to the lake. The internship also gave Mia valuable experience in aquatic ecology, science communication, and data collection. In addition, she had the opportunity to take part in the water chestnut pull with PRISM in July, which introduced her to AIS not found in Lake Sebago and gave her hands-on experience removing invasive species.

As part of the lake-wide monitoring effort, Lower Hudson PRISM also did an AIS survey of Lake Sebago. This survey found hydrilla present in a number of areas throughout the lake. While the news is distressing, we are glad to know so action can be taken, and that Mia was there this summer to serve as a Watercraft Inspection Steward and take part in WISP data collection. Managing the spread of AIS feels more important than ever, and the ACA Camp is ready to help in any way we can as we move forward.

## Objectives

- 1.D.1. Recruit and host interns
- 3.A.4. Increase the number of people who are knowledgeable about Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 5 species
- 3.B.4. Continue to encourage data collection using iNaturalist and iMapInvasives
- 3.B.6. Conduct terrestrial and Aquatic Invasive Species surveys to fill data gaps, incorporating the goals/needs of regional and state-wide working groups

- 3.E.2. Conduct projects to limit the spread of Tier 3 species focused on boundary populations or to protect high value targets
- 4.A.4. Conduct outreach and education to lake associations, boat and yacht clubs, marinas, boaters and fisherfolk on aquatic invasive species identification and their responsibilities to mitigate spread
- 4.C.1. Host events during NY Invasive Species Awareness Week (ISAW)
- 5.B.1. Continue to cover select high traffic boat launches with Watercraft Inspection Stewards
- 5.C.4. Raise awareness of SLF (spotted lanternfly) and BLD (beech leaf disease) with general public
- 5.D.2. Promote the use of clean equipment best management

**Results and Deliverables**

**Deliverables**

<i>ACA and project partners will recruit, interview, and hire a part-time AIS Management Intern</i>	After some hiring delays, an intern was hired at end of May
<i>Intern will take part in WISP and Species Identification Trainings with LH PRISM</i>	Training with LH PRISM took place mid-June
<i>Offer an educational program about AIS at the ACA Camp</i>	AIS educational program led by the intern took place in June at the ACA Camp
<i>Intern will take part in WISP and conduct 350 inspections</i>	205 inspections were conducted over the summer. (Hiring delays and COVID complications contributed to the low numbers.)
<i>Intern will lead AIS outreach at the Annual Harriman State Park Youth Regatta</i>	Regatta was canceled because of COVID, however the intern did an additional program at the ACA Camp
<i>Data analyzed by LH PRISM AIS Program Coordinator and reviewed by ACA and project partners</i>	ACA received the data spreadsheet from PRISM and met with project partners to review data and debrief on the experience

**Results**

An invasive species intern was hired by the ACA Camp at Lake Sebago to serve as a Watercraft Inspection Steward on the public launch of Lake Sebago for the 2022 season and lead educational outreach at the lake to both the general public and the Lake Sebago group camp community.

The WISP at the Lake Sebago public launch was active from June 25 - Sept 3. 205 inspections were conducted, out of a total of 233 groups. Showing approximately 88% of people agreeing to inspections.

In total 311 watercraft and 459 people interacted with the Watercraft Inspection Steward at the public launch. Watercraft included: kayaks (194), Canoes (18), Stand Up Paddleboards (28), rowboats (5), motorboat (66). 74% of groups approached have had no previous contact with a boat steward.

99 pieces of debris were removed during inspection including: 52 pieces of miscellaneous debris, 23 unknown pieces, 16 pieces *Myriophyllum spicatum*, 7 pieces *Ceratophyllum demersum*, and 1 piece of *Potamogeton* Spp.

Two educational programs on AIS and best management practices for cleaning boats took place at the ACA Camp at Lake Sebago led by the invasive species intern. Lower Hudson PRISM also led an AIS Survey on Lake Sebago and an informal knowledge share with ACA camp members on AIS.

Mia Shaw, the Invasive Species Intern, gained valuable experience in aquatic ecology, science communication, and data collection. She also had the opportunity to take part in the water chestnut pull with PRISM in July. This introduced her to AIS not found in Lake Sebago and gave her hands-on experience removing invasive species.

### **Challenges**

One of our biggest challenges was COVID. The Youth Regatta, that Mia Shaw, the Invasive Species Intern, was planning to do outreach at, was canceled last minute due to COVID. Mia also got COVID and was out for a couple weeks later in the summer. Additionally, Seven Lakes Drive was closed to non-camp members on the 4th of July weekend. All of this heavily impacted the number of boat surveys that took place.

Another challenge is that this all was a new experience for the camp. The ACA Camp is a volunteer-run camp that does not normally work on projects outside of camp, apply for grants, or have interns. Many parts of the project took longer or were more difficult than expected. For example, the hiring process had delays, which pushed back training, and impacted available dates for inspections. In the future we should think more critically about our timelines and better consider delays and scheduling conflicts. This will help us to be more realistic about what can be accomplished, especially when volunteers are also balancing other professional and personal commitments.

Lastly, it was also more difficult than anticipated supervising an intern that was not directly at camp. Even though the public dock is on the same lake as the camp, it is not visible from the camp and requires either driving, paddling, or a hike. This made it more difficult to provide day to day support for the intern.

### **Next Steps**

With the news of hydrilla in Lake Sebago, managing the spread of AIS feels more important than ever. Lake Sebago is the largest lake in Harriman state park, and a popular site for boating, fishing, swimming, and camping. It is important to the ACA Camp at Lake Sebago that we help in any way we can to increase understanding of AIS, how they spread, and to encourage boaters to use best management practices for cleaning boats. Currently the New York State Department of Environment Conservation and the Parks Department are working on a plan for combating the hydrilla. The ACA camp at Lake Sebago is ready to help in any way we can, and we look forward to continuing to work with and learn from Lower Hudson PRISM.

### **Additional Materials**

#### **Statement from Mia Shaw, AIS Intern**

Working at Sebago was a very interesting job. I had mostly positive experiences with people who were taking the survey/inspection. A handful of people were disinterested, but mostly because they wanted to get out on

the water or head home quickly (thankfully it wasn't because they hated the environment haha!). I would suggest someone come back to Sebago for next summer and there be another post at one of the popular lakes at Harriman. The majority of people weren't even aware of the environmental epidemic going on! I think the area could benefit greatly from more active outreach.

**Article from Loren Edelson, in Canoe Sport**

ACA's inaugural boat steward program

*One strategy for managing proliferating AIS*

Thank you to our inaugural Boat Steward Mia Shaw who served the greater Sebago paddling community by performing voluntary inspections for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) that were inadvertently “hitchhiking” on boats entering or leaving the lake. Checking for AIS is critical work given that an overgrowth can lead to dire economic and environmental repercussions.

Thanks to a grant from the ACA Lower Hudson PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management), ACA Camp Sebago had the funds to hire Shaw, a rising senior at Ramapo College, part-time on weekends and holidays during which time she interacted with hundreds of boaters at the Public Launch on the northeastern end of the lake, teaching them why it is imperative to “clean, drain, and dry” our boats before and after paddling.

Shaw reported that just about everyone she encountered was receptive to learning about AIS. “I just wish there were more of me,” she said, referring to the urgent need to educate paddlers about the dire consequences of proliferating AIS.

To date, there are six confirmed AIS in Lake Sebago, including the most pernicious Hydrilla, as well Eurasian Milfoil, Variable-leaf Milfoil, Fanwort, Mystery Snail, and Golden Clam.

At camp, all members and guests are required to sign the “Paddler’s Pledge” at the beginning of every season and, as a direct result of the recent confirmation of Hydrilla in the lake, the ACA Camp Committee is now requiring that everyone who hosts an on-water instructional class, training, or activity—from canoe classes to kayak polo to kid’s scavenger hunts—include a “clean, drain, dry” educational component.