

7-12-2005

Refuge Stops Aquatic Invader-at Landscape Scale

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Abstracts of presentations given on Tuesday, 12 July 2005, in session 5 of the UCOWR conference.

Recommended Citation

Goettel, Beth, "Refuge Stops Aquatic Invader-at Landscape Scale" (2005). 2005. Paper 20.
http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ucowrconfs_2005/20

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Refuge Stops Aquatic Invader-at Landscape Scale

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The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and its many partners and volunteers have completed a sixth very successful field season helping citizens throughout the Connecticut River watershed protect their aquatic ecosystems from the invasive aquatic plant water chestnut (*Trapa natans*). With financial support from the Secretary of Interior's Cooperative Conservation Initiative, a 20-acre infestation at Log Pond Cove in Holyoke, Massachusetts was prevented from setting seed by machine harvesting where the water was deep enough and with herbicide in shallow areas. In addition, the refuge enlisted 134 volunteers and cooperators, who spent 700 hours hand-pulling 25 tons of the plant, clearing the 28 water bodies where it is known to occur in the Ct. River watershed in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont. The volumes at four of these sites have dropped almost to nothing this year. Citizens, water department employees, and Service fisheries program staff, and New England Wild Flower Society volunteers checked 160 new water bodies in the four watershed states to make sure we are not missing any small, new infestations. Two new infestations were found this way, and three more were reported by citizens as a result of the project's educational awareness efforts. All of these new infestations will be hand-pulled next year.

Highlights of the season included work with 6th graders from the East Hartford, Connecticut, magnet middle school summer program and the Hampden County, Massachusetts, Sheriff's Inmate Community Service Program. Additionally, John O' Donnell, a 78 year old resident of Easthampton, Massachusetts, spent many days pulling two tons of the plant by himself after a larger volunteer work day was rained out. Sincere thanks him for inspiring all of us and to everyone who helped!