



The State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services

137



Robert R. Scott, Commissioner

December 4, 2023

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
and The Honorable Council
State House
Concord, NH 03301

INFORMATIONAL ITEM

In accordance with the provisions of RSA 487:29, this document provides the report for State Fiscal Years (SFY) 2022 and 2023, on the Milfoil and other Exotic Plants Prevention and Research Grant Program (the Program), including a description of prevention and research projects funded by the program and the extent of aid to municipalities or subdivisions of the state, non-profit corporations, and research institutions. New Hampshire currently has 97 infested waterbodies (11 river systems and 86 lakes and ponds). Grant funds are managed to maximize effectiveness at reducing the spread of infestations through prevention activities and managing those infestations already in state waterbodies.

Background:

Funds associated with the milfoil prevention and research grants began accumulating following the enactment of RSA 487:26 on January 1, 2003. Per the legislation, *"The grant program shall be funded by the portion of the lake restoration and preservation fund, established in RSA 487:25, and allocated to the milfoil and other exotic aquatic plants prevention program. Approximately 3/4 of the moneys distributed from the fund to the milfoil and other exotic aquatic plants prevention program shall be allocated for the purposes of milfoil and other exotic aquatic plants prevention and the remainder shall be allocated to milfoil and other exotic aquatic plants remediation research, as appropriate, based on grant requests."* Fee funds are derived from a \$9.50 fee from motorized boat registrations annually, yielding about \$950,000 of program funds each year.

A Request for Proposals is issued in September of each year for projects that meet the criteria outlined in Chapter Env-Wq 1300 of state administrative rules. All prevention grant proposals are reviewed by a committee comprised of a designee of the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Services, a designee of the Commissioner of the Department of Safety, and a member of the New Hampshire Lakes Management Advisory Committee. The research grants are reviewed by a team of biologists from within the Biology Section of the Watershed Management Bureau. All proposals are reviewed for eligibility and ranked based on standard review criteria for this program. These teams review the grant applications for the quality and quantity of work that is proposed, and to ensure that work is in line with programmatic goals. Applicants typically have long-established relationships with NHDES, and work with the agency to provide applications for projects that are well-planned and comprehensive in terms of their goals for prevention, research, or control.

Prevention and Research Grant Awards:

Prevention grant awards were made to NH LAKES in both 2022 and 2023, for support of ongoing activities related to the Lake Host Program that they implement. The purpose of the NH LAKES project is to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species into lakes and ponds in New Hampshire by continuing to expand and

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administer the Lake Host Program on public access sites throughout the state. This program has a proven track record of success, and since its inception in 2003, greater than 1,600 saves have been catalogued (a save is when a Lake Host removes an identified piece of an invasive aquatic plant from a boat or trailer entering or leaving a waterbody). Organizations participating in the Lake Host Program staff public access sites to conduct inspections of boats, trailers, and other recreational gear as they enter and leave public waterbodies. NH LAKES was awarded \$292,000 during each SFY.

No Exotic Aquatic Plant Research grant funds were awarded in SFY 2022 and 2023. NHDES participated in regional and national level research projects that did not involve expenditure of state funds. NHDES contributed staff time for collecting plant specimens while in the field. NHDES is scoping research options for SFY 2024 and will report out on those in the next report.

Research grant funds show their value in helping to prevent new infestations of exotic aquatic plants, and in funding research projects that build the knowledge base of state biologists and others in better managing exotic aquatic plants.

Control Grants:

In addition to the grants outlined above, funds are also awarded for control of invasive aquatic plants. These control grants are awarded to local entities (municipalities, lake associations and other such groups) for projects to control exotic aquatic plant growth in waterbodies in the state. Cost sharing on grants for exotic plant control activities is outlined under RSA 487:21. Grant match is determined based on an annual evaluation of projects, requests for funds and funds available. The requests for control grants are expected to continue to exceed the current budgeted amount for control activities, which puts more of the cost burden on a local entity, like a municipality or nonprofit organization.

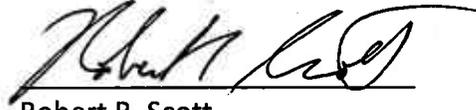
Table 1 summarizes the total cost of control projects, and the amount available to grant in 2022 and 2023. Incremental reductions in invasive species across several waterbodies is more beneficial to the state, as opposed to focusing all resources on a single or handful of projects each year, and it is a model that has worked to reduce the overall degree of infestation over time. Since state grant funds are not sufficient to pay for 100% of the management of all infestations, funding is cost-shared with local entities to expand management capabilities to more groups. Grant funds that are not fully spent in a given fiscal year are carried forward to increase grant funds in the next year.

**Table 1
 Invasive Aquatic Plant Control Grants**

SFY	Requests for Grants	Cumulative Cost of Projects	Available to Grant	Grants Awarded
2022	44	\$1,569,480	\$813,955	44
2023	52	\$1,619,881	\$885,683	52

If you have any questions regarding the contents of this report, please do not hesitate to contact me at 603-271-2958 or robert.r.scott@des.nh.gov, or Amy Smagula, Limnologist/Exotic Species Program Coordinator, at 603-271-2248 or amy.p.smagula@des.nh.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert R. Scott", written over a horizontal line.

Robert R. Scott
Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Jeb Bradley, President of the NH Senate
The Honorable Sherman Packard, Speaker of the NH House