



Belgrade Lakes Invasive Aquatics Program Updates — 2025

10/13/25

Internal Report — For BLA Board and 7 Lakes Alliance Only

Please request an abridged version before sharing publicly. 7 Lakes Alliance will provide appropriate newsletter and social media content upon request.

Quick Summary

This season was both busy and successful! We will continue diving with a “skeleton crew” through the end of October. Diving during the shoulder seasons (spring and fall) is conducted by 7 Lakes’ year-round management team, Sharon and Josie. This year, we were also able to retain two additional divers through late October to stay ahead of new and emerging threats.

With the addition of Messalonskee Lake management and the new infestation in North Pond, 7 Lakes doubled its field crew this year. Even with that increase, it wasn’t enough — we’ll need to triple our capacity in 2026 to meet growing demands.

Lake Associations provide financial contributions to meet the minimum cost-match required for state grant support on their respective waterbodies. We are currently in Year 1 of a two-year grant cycle for Great and Long Ponds. The Belgrade Lakes Association (BLA) has pledged \$20,000 in 2025 and \$20,000 in 2026 as a match for that grant. The donation is based on current conditions in Great Pond; however, if a new threat (e.g., curly-leaf pondweed) emerges, additional funding may be required.

Crew and Cost Overview (as of 9/29/25 payroll cycle)

(Dive/survey time only — excludes materials, supplies, and management time. Rapid response funds are currently covered by the state. Final invoices will be issued in November. These figures are for context only and do not reflect final billing.)

Project	7 Lakes Hours	7 Lakes Cost	Contractors	Lake Association Match
North Pond	1,517	\$34,986.27	—	\$10,000
East Pond	594	\$12,264.49	—	<i>Rapid response</i>
Great & Long Ponds	1,183	\$25,829.22	—	\$20,000
Messalonskee Lake	1,561	\$32,385.82	\$47,945.00	\$30,000

A full Invasive Aquatics Program Report will be circulated to Lake Trust in early November.

We encourage all Lake Association leaders to read the entire IAP Report — not just sections pertaining to their own lake(s) — to better understand watershed-wide progress, priorities, and threats.

Education & Adopt-A-Shoreline

7 Lakes continued hosting weekly Adopt-A-Shoreline and Aquatic Plant ID workshops every Wednesday this season, along with several appearances at local farmers markets.

In addition to these staples, Josie expanded youth education through partnerships with Belgrade Rec and Camp Tracy, ensuring that “eyes on the water” continue into future generations. We also grew our adult education programming, hosting presentations for the Central Maine Gardener’s Club, Lake Association annual meetings, and various road associations.

Prevention

Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBIs) have concluded for the season, with the exception of bass tournaments. While the state requires tournament organizers to inspect their own boats, compliance varies — so we continue to staff all known tournaments to ensure proper inspections.

Current CBI Stats (as of 9/29/25 payroll cycle)

Launch	Boats Inspected	CBI Hours	Plant Fragments	Confirmed Invasive Fragments
Great Pond	5,446	1,542	46	0
Long Pond	3,780	1,549	9	0
Messalonskee (Oak)	1,436	656	27	1
Messalonskee (Sidney)	1,546	692	28	13
North Pond	811	554	41	0
East Pond	1,475	999	12	0
Salmon Lake	1,007	930	14	0

Remediation

Curly-Leaf Pondweed (CLP)

We continue to see a steady decline in CLP in the East Pond Serpentine, thanks to our “weekly weeding” strategy. Since 7 Lakes began managing the infestation, CLP biomass has decreased by 89%.

We're still in the early stages of managing the new CLP infestation in North Pond, focusing on mapping its distribution, identifying patterns of growth, and removing new plants ASAP. North Pond is almost entirely littoral, with few sheltered coves or tributaries. This allows CLP to grow virtually anywhere in the lake — and because it grows in open water, it spreads easily through wave action and boat traffic.

Given these conditions, rapid detection and removal are essential to prevent further spread.

Variable-Leaf Milfoil (VWM)

Biweekly visits to all Great Pond sites (Rome Trout Brook, Robbins Mill Stream, Great Meadow Stream, and others) will continue through the end of October. Most areas — including Robbins Mill, Rome, Swan, North Bay, The Lagoon (Hatch Cove), and Finger Reef — showed less VWM in 2025 than in prior years, again thanks to consistent manual weeding.

Great Meadow Stream received an herbicide treatment in June 2022, with minimal regrowth since then. However, we noted a sudden uptick of regrowth in July 2025, which was promptly removed and reported to Maine DEP.

Unfortunately, VWM has been reintroduced at the Route 225 bridge **AGAIN**, just north of the structure — an area that had been clear since 2018. This setback is both frustrating and concerning. I'll be discussing this with IFW, and encourage BLA to consider financially supporting CBI coverage to this paddle launch in 2026.



Messalonskee Lake

This year marked Year 1 of 7 Lakes' management oversight of Messalonskee Lake — and after seeing it firsthand, it's clear: it's a big challenge.

Several areas in the central and northern reaches are responding well to consistent manual removal. However, southern areas are far too dense for mechanical control and will require herbicide intervention. Maine DEP remains the sole permit holder for herbicide treatments and ranks sites by priority. Messalonskee Lake and Belgrade Stream are both slated to receive treatment, though timing remains TBD.

Program Impact

Looking at the CBI table — notice any patterns in the number of invasive plant fragments intercepted? Why does the Sidney launch on Messalonskee stand out compared to other infested sites?

Yes, southern Messalonskee and Belgrade Stream are heavily infested, but they are currently unmanaged. By contrast, since 7 Lakes began managing the northern basin, the number of invasive fragments caught at the Oakland launch dropped from 10 last year to just 1 this year.

Our results speak for themselves:

- No invasive milfoil has been found on boats leaving Great Pond since 2018.
- No CLP has been found on boats leaving East or North Pond since management began.

These outcomes prove that early detection and immediate removal directly reduce the risk of spread between lakes.

So the question remains:

Who's ready to help support herbicide treatment in Belgrade Stream and CBI coverage so Great Pond stops getting re-infested with milfoil at the Route 225 bridge?

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your support! Let's keep the positive momentum going!

-Captian Mann

August & September- emails from the field

7/8/25

Quick Summary

We survived the 4th with minimal casualties! Curly-leaf on North Pond is wrapping up, meaning time on Great and Long Ponds is ramping up.

Education & Adopt-A-Shoreline

In addition to our weekly Aquatic Plant ID and Adopt-A-Shoreline (AAS) workshops 10-11:30 AM every Wednesday in the summer, we are providing several workshops at local summer camps. Josie has been working with Camp Tracy on McGrath Pond and Belgrade Rec on Great Pond to educate the future generations on aquatic plant ID and survey.

Prevention (same as last month)

We are fully staffed up until the end of August now that high school students are free for the summer! Great Pond and Long Pond will have 12 hour/7days a week coverage until the end of September and weekend coverage through October. Staffing the boat launches is challenging in May, September, and October as college and high school students are not available. So far no invasive aquatic plants have been found on boats

entering or leaving Long Pond and Great Pond in 2025. There have been several invasive milfoil fragments removed from boats leaving Messalonskee Lake. To follow the realtime CBI data (# boats inspected, # plants found, etc.), bookmark [The Online Dashboard](#)

Remediation

Curly-leaf pondweed: The crew is done diving in North Pond until the end of August- unless curly-leaf pondweed is reported by volunteers. Curly-leaf is now found throughout North Pond. It is unclear how long the plants have been there. This is an incredibly difficult species to work with. All of North Pond is suitable for curly-leaf pondweed to grow in- it's all less than 20 feet deep. North Pond has very few sheltered coves and streams, so most of the curly-leaf is actually rooted out in open water, where waves, wind, and motorboats escalate the rate of spread. As of now, we have removed all rooted curly-leaf found. So far no curly-leaf has been found in Great Meadow Stream (above or below Route 225).

Variable-leaf milfoil: Variable-leaf milfoil density is down in all Great Pond sites. Robbins Mill Stream has some of the lowest densities we have seen in the past 8 years (yay!). A beautiful blanket of Farewell's milfoil, a native species, now covers the sediments around Hoyt Island Camps docks, which may help prevent variable-leaf from colonizing that area. *Farwell's milfoil is a low-growing species and does not tend to cause issues for motorboats. Rome Trout Brook still has a fair amount of variable-leaf milfoil, however, areas that were covered with benthic mats have made some clearings. Since our crew began pulling in Messalonskee Lake in June, we have seen a significant decrease in the amount of milfoil fragments caught by CBIs on boats leaving the Oakland Launch. This just goes to show that our methods of invasive plant removal minimize spread and protect other lakes in the watershed. The state removed the remaining surface use restriction buoy at the mouth of GMS and the signage at the boat launch. Unfortunately, this means people will start bringing their motorboats back into the stream. Since GMS has been closed to motorboat traffic, we have *nearly eradicated* invasive milfoil, and we have seen an increase in sensitive nesting habitat. Please tell your friends and neighbors that if they love loons and sandhill cranes, keep motorboats OUT of GMS!

6/10/25

Quick Summary

Both CBI and Dive crews are fully staffed up and in action!

Education & Adopt-A-Shoreline

Weekly Aquatic Plant ID and Adopt-A-Shoreline (AAS) workshops will resume the 3rd week of June. They are 10-11:30 AM every Wednesday in the summer, at 7 Lakes. This is a great thing to advertise to new members and existing members who want an AAS refresher. We will also have a mini workshop at a handful of Farmer's Markets this year, to reach the weekend crowd. Plant workshops have live samples of curly-leaf pondweed and variable-leaf milfoil alongside many native look-a-likes.

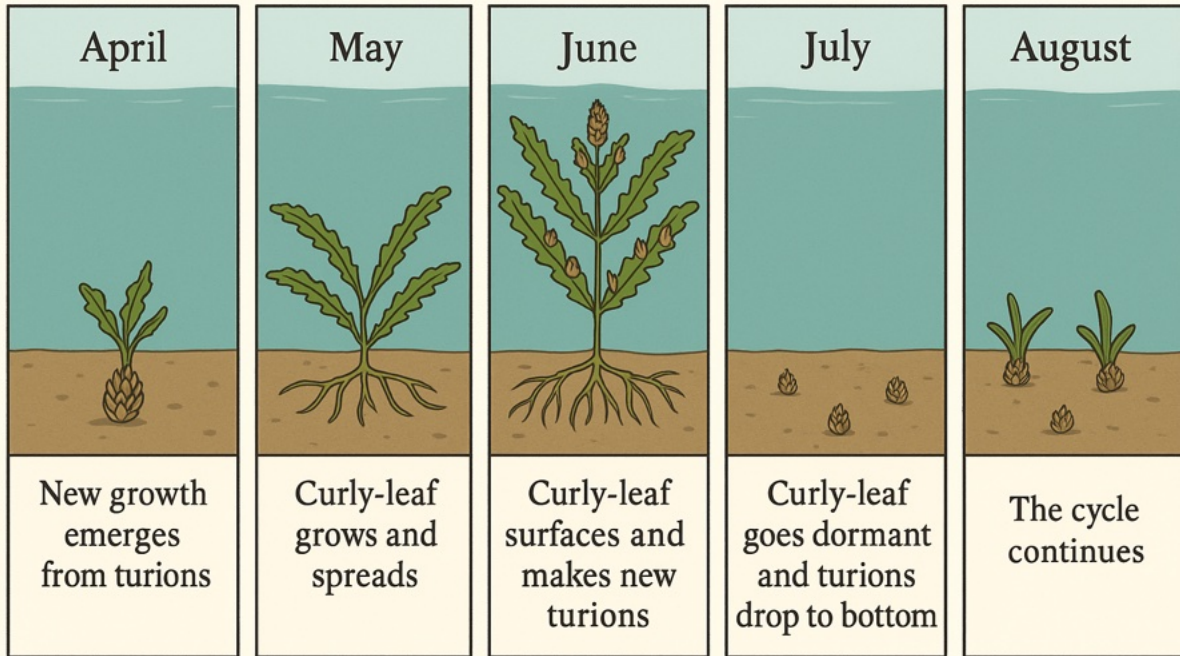
Prevention

We are fully staffed up until the end of August now that high school students are free for the summer! Great Pond and Long Pond will have 12 hour/7 days a week coverage until the end of September and weekend coverage through October. Staffing the boat launches is challenging in May, September, and October as college and high school students are not available. So far no invasive aquatic plants have been found on boats entering or leaving Long Pond and Great Pond in 2025. There have been several invasive milfoil fragments removed from boats leaving Messalonskee Lake. To follow the realtime CBI data (# boats inspected, # plants found, etc.), bookmark [The Online Dashboard](#)

Remediation

Curly-leaf pondweed: The crew is wrapping up curly-leaf pondweed on North Pond in the next two weeks. Curly-leaf pondweed grows differently than our native plants- reaching its peak growth in early June and then going dormant for July and August. After peak growth, the plants become brittle, causing lots of fragmentation and spread. Due to this growth pattern, it is crucial that we harvest the plants before they start dying back. So far, the majority of the plants have been found around Pomleau Island, however, volunteers have reported a few patches at the south end, not far from the opening to Great Meadow Stream. We must do everything we can to keep curly-leaf out of Great Meadow Stream!

Curly-leaf pondweed growth in North Pond







Variable-leaf milfoil: A second crew will focus on milfoil this year. The smaller infestations in Great Pond (Swan, Rome Trout, Robbins, etc) will be visited every other week as per usual. Great Meadow Stream will receive a full SCUBA survey every few weeks. So far milfoil density in all Great Pond sites is down (yay!). GMS is due for the 2nd SCUBA survey of the year next week. The 1st dive survey resulted in 1 plant found and removed. Heading east into Messalonskee Lake, we are starting Year-1 of taking over milfoil operations in Messalonskee and connected stress (Belgrade and Messalonskee Streams). We will have our own boat out harvesting for 10 weeks and the contactors, New England Milfoil, for 6 weeks. This is a very large project that will take considerable time and resources, but we are happy to get started so we can do our part to minimize the spread of milfoil into other lakes! Our CBIs have already found ~8 milfoil fragments on boats leaving Messalonskee. Those fragments could have started infestations in other lakes, including Great and Long Pond!

5/12/25

Quick summary

Back in the water AGAIN! We are very excited to be back in the water. So far diving has focused on North Pond, since that invasive plant species goes dormant by mid-June. Milfoil work is starting soon (right on schedule).

Education & Adopt-A-Shoreline (SAME AS LAST MONTH)

Weekly Aquatic Plant ID and Adopt-A-Shoreline (AAS) workshops will resume the 3rd week of June. They are 10-11:30 AM every Wednesday in the summer, at 7 Lakes. This is a great thing to advertise to new members and existing members who want an AAS refresher.

Prevention

The CBI schedule is getting pretty full for the summer, yay! However, the coverage during the beginning (late May - mid June) and end (end of August - October) is still pretty patchy. Most CBIs are highschool and college students, so it is always a challenge to fill shifts when school is in session. Please encourage folks to volunteer during those poor coverage times! Interested parties should contact Josie at invasives.coordinator@7lakesalliance.org

We finally got word from Maine-DEP regarding CBI awards. From Maine-DEP: \$6,000 (GP) and \$5,000 (LP). The column “agreed budget” is based on the maximum CBI coverage plan (gold plan). The 2nd invoice, after CBI season ends, will reflect the actual CBI hours filled.

Boat Launch	DEP Awards 2023	DEP Awards 2024	DEP Awards 2025	status	Agreed Budget 2025	Town Money	Invoice 2025
Great Pond	\$6,656.00	\$5,000.00	\$6,000.00	Infested	\$33,754.20	\$3,150.00	\$24,604.20
Long Pond	\$2,875.00	\$4,000.00	\$5,000.00	Un-infested	\$33,754.20	\$0.00	\$28,754.20

Remediation

Diving has begun! So far we have been working in North Pond to remove invasive curly-leaf pondweed before it produces new turions (how it reproduces). We are checking up on Robbins Mill, Richard’s Point Cove (Hatch Cove), and Finger Reef on Tuesday. Next week we will check on Great Meadows Stream, Rome Trout Brook, and Swan Brook. After those initial check-up dives, we will be visiting each location weekly/biweekly as per usual.

4/7/25

Quick summary

Hiring for the dive team is wrapping up! Oars in the water this week, flippers in the water next week! Brr!

Education & Adopt-A-Shoreline (SAME AS LAST MONTH)

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Prevention

The CBI schedule is getting pretty full for the summer, yay! However, the coverage during the beginning (late May - mid June) and end (end of August - October) is still pretty patchy. Most CBIs are highschool and college students, so it is always a challenge to fill shifts when school is in session. Please encourage folks to volunteer during those poor coverage times! Interested parties should contact Josie at invasives.coordinator@7lakesalliance.org

Remediation

Now that ice is out on Great Pond, North Pond, and East Pond, we can begin checking up on existing infestations. Divers will likely be in North Pond by next week. 7 Lakes received the full amount requested (330 k) from Maine-DEP in a competitive grant application for invasive plant removal. This grant supports 2 years of plant removal and survey in Great Pond and Messalonskee Lake. We used a \$40 k match from BLA in this grant (\$20 k per year). If we find more regrowth than expected, that number might change a bit. THANK YOU for contributing to this effort! *the \$40 k commitment from BLA is for Great Pond only. Friends of Messalonskee and 7 Lakes contributed \$ match to work in Messalonskee Lake and connected streams.

3/11/25

Quick summary

We are gearing up for the season! All grant applications are in and we are waiting to hear back about funding from Maine-DEP. Applications for the dive crew and CBI are starting to roll in. Josie will train "Invasive Aquatic Ambassadors" from each lake association on how to install and use the Homebase App, which is how we communicate and schedule the CBIs.

Education & Adopt-A-Shoreline

Weekly Aquatic Plant ID and Adopt-A-Shoreline (AAS) workshops will resume the 3rd week of June. They are 10-11:30 AM every Wednesday in the summer, at 7 Lakes. This is a great thing to advertise to new members and existing members who want an AAS refresher.

Prevention

Hiring is underway! We would LOVE to have more adults participate in the CBI program. CBI is a great way for retired folks to connect with the community and stay busy. All are welcome to apply to be a paid CBI or volunteer. BLA has committed to the "gold plan" on Great and Long Ponds again, which is the plan with the maximum CBI coverage (12 hours a day, extending into fall).

Remediation

The crew will spend half their time in Great Pond and the other half in East/North. We still have 7 active management sites on Great Pond. We started seeing an uptick in milfoil regrowth in GMS in late October. Fingers crossed we don't have too much regrowth this year, but we are right on time to have more regrowth based on similar herbicide treatments in New England. The first SCUBA survey of GMS will be in early May. Josie and Sharon will be out doing pre-season field work in April. The full crew will start in June.