



**For immediate release
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DCR'S WEED WATCHERS PROGRAM MAKES BIG CATCH

Private citizen discovers invasive Hydrilla in a Pembroke pond

Acting on a tip from a concerned citizen, biologists from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Lakes and Ponds Program recently responded to a potential sighting of Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) in Hobomock Pond in Pembroke. Hydrilla is an extremely aggressive, non-native aquatic plant that has devastated waters in Florida and other southern areas with its lake-choking growth. To date, however, it has been documented at only one other Massachusetts location, in a pond in Barnstable.

During their visit earlier this month, the DCR biologists confirmed that Hobomock Pond is indeed heavily infested with Hydrilla. While the infestation is obviously bad news, the good news is that the discovery is the result of a successful monitoring initiative: The Hydrilla was found by a volunteer who had been trained through DCR's Weed Watchers Program.

"The detection of this invasive plant is an excellent example of what can be accomplished through education and partnership with concerned citizens at the local level," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "It reinforces the benefit of investing in a group of citizens to help DCR with its mission by serving as the agency's eyes and ears at lakes and ponds across the state. We are deeply grateful for the help from a private citizen in this particular case."

Weed Watchers training is a free service provided by DCR to lake associations and other concerned groups. A key goal is to prevent infestation of Massachusetts's lakes and ponds by non-native, invasive aquatic plants, and to work toward controlling and removing existing populations of invasives. The program trains local groups to monitor their lakes and ponds and to develop a removal plan if an infestation is found. Invasive species spread rapidly and form dense mats that can make boating, fishing, and swimming impossible. As the recreational and aesthetic value of the lake declines, property values around the lake also decrease.

This is not the first time a DCR-trained volunteer has helped make an important discovery. Weed Watchers have also stopped boats from entering water bodies after spotting invasive plants attached to the boat motors or trailers, and they have worked across the Commonwealth to educate boaters, anglers, and lake abutters on how to protect the state's lakes and ponds from aquatic invasive species.

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Staff members of the DCR Lakes and Ponds Program have already begun working with the Massachusetts Aquatic Invasive Species Working Group, the Pembroke Ponds Watershed Association, and the Pembroke Conservation Commission to develop and execute a response plan to manage and, it is hoped, eradicate the Hydrilla in Hobomock Pond and prevent its spread.

During their visit to Pembroke, state biologists also surveyed the nearby Furnace Pond, Little Sandy Bottom Pond, Great Sandy Bottom Pond, Mill Pond, Stetson Pond, and Oldham Pond. Hydrilla was not observed in any of those other bodies of water.

For more information on DCR's Weed Watchers Program, and to get involved, visit www.mass.gov/lakesandponds.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.