



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

Further Information Contact:
Dennis Schain
860 424-3110

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

DEP TO FUND PROJECTS TO CONTROL HIGHLY INVASIVE PLANTS

Supplemental Environmental Project funds to be used to fight mile-a-minute vine in Newtown and New Milford, fanwort in Litchfield and Morris, and water chestnut in Hartford

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced funding for four projects designed to control several highly invasive non-native plants.

The projects in the towns of New Milford and Newtown are targeting mile-a-minute vine (*Persicaria perfoliata*). The projects in Litchfield and Morris will address an infestation of fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) in the upper Bantam River and its outlet into Bantam Lake will be targeted. The funding will also support ongoing efforts to eradicate water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) from a flood control pond in the City of Hartford.

The \$115,000 in funding for these projects comes from Supplemental Environmental Project ("SEP") payments made to DEP as part of the resolution of enforcement actions. These funds are used to support for environmentally beneficial projects.

"The introduction and spread of invasive plants in Connecticut poses a serious threat to our native ecosystems, and can affect the ecological, recreational, and economic interests of the state," said DEP Commissioner Amey Marrella. "This means that when resources become available we must take all possible steps to prevent the spread of these highly invasive species."

Three of the projects – Newtown, New Milford, Litchfield – had been the highest ranked project proposals from a now defunct invasive plants grants program. They were selected from more than forty project proposals that had been submitted to a program that had been known as "Grants to Municipalities for Control of Invasive Plants."

"All four of these projects are critical in the fight to prevent the spread of invasive species," said Commissioner Marrella. "Mile-a-minute vine is relatively new to Connecticut and has a limited distribution so there is still a chance of preventing its widespread dispersal."

“Although fanwort is a problem in a number of water bodies in Connecticut, controlling this highly aggressive aquatic nuisance in the Bantam River system will prevent it from becoming completely established throughout Bantam Lake, the state’s largest natural lake and a highly valuable natural and recreational resource,” Commissioner Marrella said. “Finally, clearing water chestnut from the pond in Hartford will eliminate a major source of infestation to the Connecticut River.”

Below are summaries of the four projects:

1. **Mile-a-minute vine control project in Newtown:** Project grant of \$11,000. Volunteers led by town of Newtown staff will conduct pre-control monitoring at sites with mile-a-minute vine and will hold outreach events for mile-a-minute vine awareness and public education. The town will then use a combination of hand-pulling, mowing, biological controls and herbicide applications to control mile-a-minute vine at multiple locations. Weed barriers may also be used, and areas controlled will be reseeded with native plant seed mix. The project may be used as a template for other future invasive plant removal efforts in the town.
2. **Mile-a-minute vine control project in New Milford:** Project grant of \$14,000. The town of New Milford will use a combination of hand-pulling, biological control, mowing and herbicides to control invasive mile-a-minute vine in several locations including along roadsides.
3. **Fanwort control in the Bantam River system, Litchfield/Morris:** Project grant of \$78,000. This project will use diver-assisted suction harvesting to remove fanwort in the overrun reaches of the lower Bantam River and other waters upstream of Bantam Lake. In addition to funding this project, DEP will be working with the town of Litchfield, the town of Morris and the Bantam Lake Protective Association to adequately address fanwort patches in Bantam Lake before the invasive can become established throughout the lake. As part of this effort, benthic barriers will be tested to determine if they are effective in controlling fanwort growth in the lake. The re-growth of fanwort from cleared areas will be evaluated over the next two years and a long-term management plan will be prepared to develop a strategy for continued fanwort removal from Bantam Lake, the Bantam River, and Little Pond.

- 4. Water chestnut control at Hartford Flood Control Pond, City of Hartford:** Project grant of \$6,000. DEP will enter into a Joint Funding Agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to share the cost of herbicide treatments at the Hartford Flood Control Pond with the goal of eradicating water chestnut. Control actions were initiated at this site in 2006 after a large amount of water chestnut had been released into the Connecticut River from this previously unknown source. Control actions have been implemented every year since and the number of water chestnut has declined substantially. Annual control actions are essential until complete eradication has been achieved.

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