

Battle against hydrilla heats up

Schumer seeks
emergency funds
to combat invasive
aquatic weed

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GENEVA — Concern about the possible spread of hydrilla in the Finger Lakes has caught the attention of Sen. Charles Schumer.

The fast-growing invasive species plant has been found in the inlet to Cayuga Lake near Ithaca and has the potential to choke off waterways and make boating and fishing nearly impossible.

Schumer, D-NY, has called in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to immediately release about \$380,000 in federal funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to combat the hydrilla.



Schumer

He also urged the agency to work with the Environmental Protection Agency to craft a comprehensive, multi-year strategy to combat the plant's presence.

"Hydrilla can grow six to eight inches per day and has the capacity to spread throughout the Finger Lakes and into the Great

HYDRILLA

Schumer: 'We can't let this be the next zebra mussel'

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Lakes if a complete, long-term plan to eradicate the weed is not adopted," Schumer said.

Schumer said it will cost less to attack the problem proactively, rather than waiting for the plant to spread and then try to eradicate it.

"This could do millions of dollars in damage to New York's economy," he warned.

"We cannot let that happen. The Finger Lakes region generates \$600 million in economic activity, in large part due to the tourists, boaters and fishermen who visit these treasures every year," Schumer said.

A Tompkins County plan to begin treatment of hydrilla between May 28 and July 1 has been stalled due to bureaucratic red tape holding up approval of critical federal funding that has been allocated.

"We can either spend a small amount of money in the fight now or millions down the road when it may be too late. We can't let this be the next zebra mussel. We shouldn't wait," Schumer said.

He made his appeal in letters to Acting Fish and Wildlife Director Rowan Gould and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson.

In the letters, he notes that the Great Lake Restoration Initiative, supported by Congress with hundreds of millions of federal dollars, has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to new invasive species in

Presentation will detail threat to Cayuga and Seneca lakes

FAYETTE — The Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Seneca County Water Quality Coordinating Committee will host a presentation on the hydrilla threat to Cayuga and Seneca lakes.

The program will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 13, at the Fayette Fire Department, 4200 Route 414.

The program will explore ways the public can help stop the spread of hydrilla. Boaters, lake property owners and others concerned about the lakes are encouraged to attend.

The presenter will be Sharon Anderson, a member of the Cayuga Inlet Hydrilla Task Force and Environmental Program Leader of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County for more than three years.

Previously, she was watershed steward for the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network.

Her talk will include the threat and consequences of hydrilla, its identification and differences from other similar-looking plants, and what a person should do if they find it.

"Hydrilla is a real threat, and we feel it is important to collaborate in getting information out to the public," said Philip Griswold, Soil and Water Conservation District Manager.

"Just a fragment of the plant attached to a boat can end up rooting and causing it to spread. We hope people will come out and see what they can do to stop its spread," said Averell Bauder, executive director of Seneca County Cooperative Extension.

The event is free. Pre-registration is not required but is appreciated and can be done by calling 539-9251 or e-mailing Seneca@Cornell.edu.

the water.

Schumer said a single stem of the hydrilla plant can grow 268 feet in just five weeks.

He cited the state of Florida's failure to address a hydrilla problem early and said it now spends \$30

million a year to mow hydrilla plants throughout its waterways.

In contrast, an eradication plan involving herbicides and a chemical called benthic could cost \$1 million a year for each of the next five years.

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