

Partners work together to manage a highly invasive aquatic organism in the Keuka Outlet  
Emily Staychock, Watershed/Environmental Educator Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County &  
Patrick Killen, Town of Jerusalem Supervisor, KWIC Boardmember

In October 2015 Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County, working in cooperation with the Keuka Lake Association, confirmed the presence of the aquatic invasive species starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa*) in the Keuka Lake Outlet between the Penn Yan village boat launch and the western edge of the marshland. In September 2016, an infestation was identified at the mouth of Sugar Creek where it joins Keuka Lake that had spread a few hundred feet into the lake by July 2017.

Starry stonewort is a highly invasive macroalgae. It is light green in color with a plant-like stem and leaf-like structures and is best identified by its star-shaped bulbils, or rhizoids, which anchor it to the substrate. This algae can grow into dense mats that cover the waterbody floor, crowding out native aquatic species and preventing fish spawning and nesting, particularly of bass, sunfish, darters and minnows. These dense mats can make boating, fishing and swimming difficult. Fragments of starry stonewort can get caught on watercraft, transported to new locations and can form new infestations.

In February 2017, seeing the potential threat to Keuka Lake posed by this invasive species, Keuka Watershed Improvement Cooperative, (KWIC) decided to take action and has recently been awarded a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) grant to control the infestation of starry stonewort in the Outlet through mechanical harvesting. KWIC is an inter-municipal organization representing the six towns and two villages in the Keuka Lake Watershed.

KWIC has contracted with Gary Leroux from CNY Aquatic Harvesting, who beginning in the week of August 28<sup>th</sup>, will conduct a two to three day harvest of portions of Keuka Outlet in an attempt to remove as much stonewort as possible. The material harvested will be off loaded at the Penn Yan boat launch, allowed to drain, and removed by highway department workers from the Village of Penn Yan, Yates County, and Town of Jerusalem.

The Keuka Lake Association, Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Cornell Cooperative Extension are partners providing KWIC with technical support for this project. The Keuka Lake community is fortunate to benefit from strong partnerships between organizations and agencies that help steward the Lake. We are also fortunate that the Keuka Lake Association's watercraft steward program remains vigilant in inspecting watercraft to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive organisms. These partners will continue to work together to address additional starry stonewort infestations, and may seek volunteers from the community to assist in future endeavors.

Contacts for more information:

Patrick Killen, Keuka Watershed Improvement Cooperative:

315-595-2287

[supervisor@jerusalem-ny.org](mailto:supervisor@jerusalem-ny.org)

Emily Staychock, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County and the Keuka Lake Association:

315-536-5123 x4127

[ecs268@cornell.edu](mailto:ecs268@cornell.edu)

Dennis Carlson, Keuka Lake Association President

[info@keukalakeassoc.org](mailto:info@keukalakeassoc.org)