

Adirondacks aquatic pest fight grows

Clear water plan expands from Lake George control program started in 2014

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Friends, Chris Catena, left, boat owner, Joe Stanton, background in the boat, and Sal Bidot, right, launch the boat at Norowal Marina on Lake George on Thursday, May 15, 2014, in Bolton Landing, N.Y. The boat had to be inspected for invasive species before they could put it in the lake. Thursday was the first day that the various regional inspection stations were operating around Lake George. The purpose of the inspections are to make sure that no boats are carrying invasive species into the lake. Boaters looking for information on the inspection sites and hours of operation can go to [www.http://lgboatinspections.com](http://lgboatinspections.com). (Paul Buckowski / Times Union)

Boaters who launch into Adirondack lakes, rivers and streams this summer will see new efforts meant to bar the spread of aquatic invasive species under an agreement among the state, local governments, lake associations and conservation groups that was announced Tuesday by Gov. [Andrew Cuomo](#).

The agreement builds on efforts that led to a two-year invasive species control program begun in 2014 in Lake George, where boaters must have vessels inspected at one of seven stations before launching into the lake.

More than 50 groups have endorsed a new agreement to extend such protections — on a voluntary basis — into the rest of the Adirondacks, where a relatively small number of invasives have so far been found.

"Preventing the spread of these invasive species is crucial to safeguarding the

Adirondack waters both today and for the future," said the governor, who has proposed a \$1 million increase to the [Environmental Protection Fund](#) as part of his 2015-16 budget to fight the spread of invasive species.

A draft version of the agreement from January stated that estimated costs included \$750,000 to purchase and install 30 boat decontamination stations throughout the Adirondacks, with annual operating expenses of \$1.5 million.

No such estimate was included in the final agreement, which merely pledged cooperation in seeking public and private grants to pay for the program. [Tom Mailey](#), a spokesman for the state [Department of Environmental Conservation](#), said the plan was "still in development."

The agreement called for an invasives control system for the Adirondacks to be set up "at the earliest possible time, with the 2015 boating season as the target date." The Adirondacks contains about 3,000 lakes and 30,000 miles of rivers and streams.

Associations signing the agreement include associations for major Adirondack destinations like Schroon Lake, Indian Lake, Lake Colby, Long Lake, Lake Pleasant/Sacandaga, Loon Lake, Raquette Lake, Upper Saranac Lake, Chateaugay Lake, Paradox Lake, Piseco Lake, and the Ausable River, as well as the [Adirondack Lakes Alliance](#).

State agencies included the [Lake George Park Commission](#), which implemented the first invasive species inspection program east of the Mississippi, as well as the DEC and [Adirondack Park Agency](#).

Adirondack towns that joined the agreement included Bolton, Chester, Horicon, North Hudson, Newcomb, Minerva, Indian Lake, and Long Lake, as well as the village of Lake George, [Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages](#), and the [Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board](#).

The agreement was also endorsed by lawmakers in Warren, Hamilton and Lewis counties, as well as the [Adirondack Landowners Association](#) and [North Country Chamber of Commerce](#).

Conservation group in support included the Fund for Lake George, which helped development the mandatory inspection program, the [Adirondack Council](#), [Adirondack Mountain Club](#), Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, the Nature Conservancy, and Protect the Adirondacks.

"The number and variety of organizations signing this agreement demonstrates the serious threat that aquatic invasive species pose to the ecological and economic health of the Adirondack region," DEC Commissioner [Joe Martens](#) said.

Some supporters praised the voluntary aspect of the program. "This voluntary program eliminates a regulatory approach to governing boaters while addressing the need for education and prevention, which is an approach all boaters can embrace," said [Brian Towers](#), president of the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages.

Village of Lake George Mayor [Robert Blais](#), who also worked with the [SAVE coalition](#) of towns around the lake to support the mandatory boat inspection program, said, "Using our initial success in Lake George as a model and continued leadership of the governor, our group looks forward to working with all our neighbors in the Adirondacks."

[Eric Siy](#), executive director of The Fund for Lake George, called the agreement an "historic call to action (that) expresses the unprecedented gravity of the threat posed by invasives and the necessary resolve for preventing them from ruining our precious waters."