



2020 Lake George Boat Inspection/Invasive Species Prevention Program Mid-Season Update

August 3, 2020

Season Overview

The 2020 boat inspection season began on Thursday, May 21st this year, three weeks later than the traditional start date, due to the Covid-19 pandemic that was being brought under control in NYS at the time. Even with the three week delayed start date, the summer of 2020 has shaped up to be the busiest boating summer on Lake George since our invasive species prevention program began seven years ago in 2014.

Most stations opened May 21st, however the Rogers Rock inspection site opened July 1st when the DEC campground opened (delayed opening due to Covid). This delayed start resulted in reduced staffing expenses to date (Table 1). However, total boater contacts to date this season is 1,500 more than this time last year, likely a result of both good weather and people avoiding flying and spending more time recreating locally.

Table 1: A Comparison of the 2019 and 2020 Inspection seasons through July 31, 2020

Through 7/31	2020 (current)	2019
Entrance With Seal	6,845	5,448
Entrance Without Seal	5,239	5,916
Exit	7,259	6,432
Total	19,343	17,796
Decontaminations	429	570
Decon Rate (%)	8.19	9.63
Vessels with Confirmed AIS	64	51
Staff Hours Worked	10,465	13,361
Staffing Costs	\$192,853.23	\$ 244,069.25

Inspection activity is high at Mossy Point, likely due to the fact that Rogers Rock campground was closed and gated until July 1st. The Dunham’s Bay inspection station has seen fewer inspections than normal so far this year, likely because some of the marinas on the east side of the lake are closed to public launches and more boaters are seeking to launch at the Million Dollar Beach and Norowal Sites (Figure 1). Million Dollar Beach continues to be the busiest inspection station and launch on Lake George.

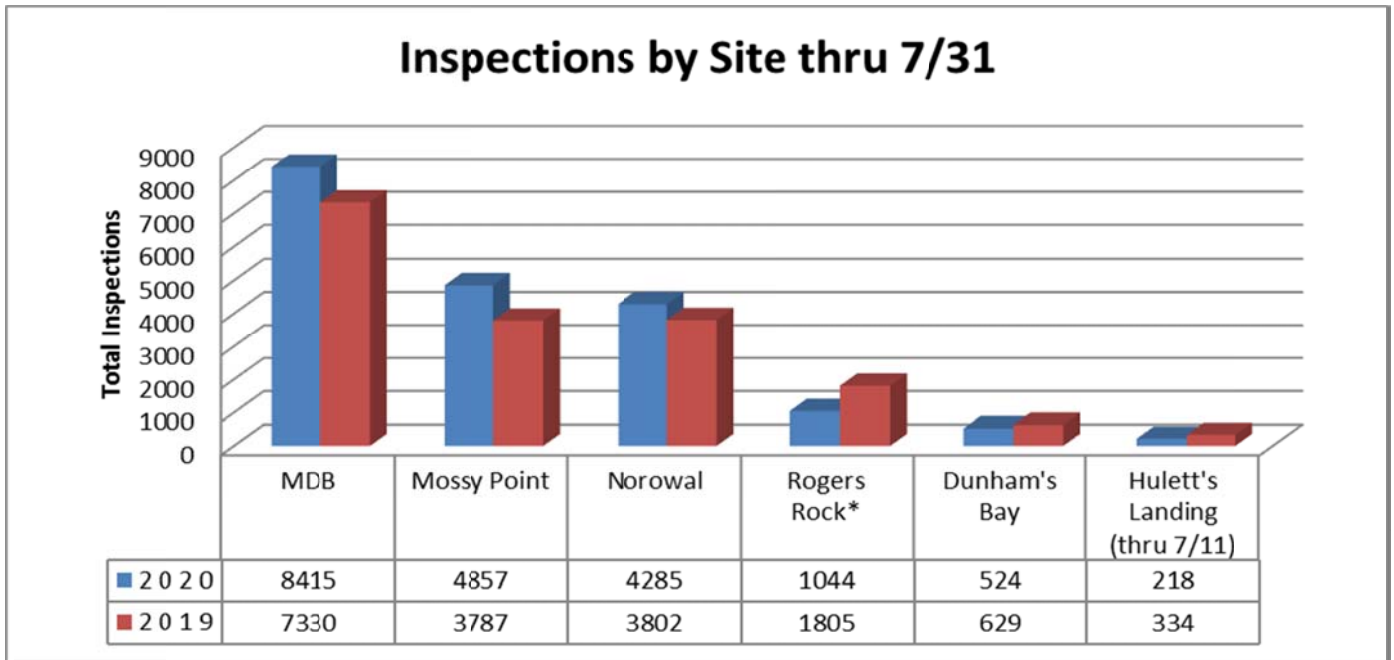


Figure 1: Shows a comparison of total inspection activity by site in 2020 and 2019. *Note that the Rogers Rock inspection station was not opened until July 1st.

All samples collected from inspected vessels are sent to the Lake George Association for identification. Figure 2 shows the number of each aquatic invasive species intercepted so far this year. A total of 64 boats carrying invasive species to Lake George have been found so far this year. Out of those 64 boats, seven had two invasive species on them when they arrived at the inspection station. All such vessels are decontaminated prior to launch.

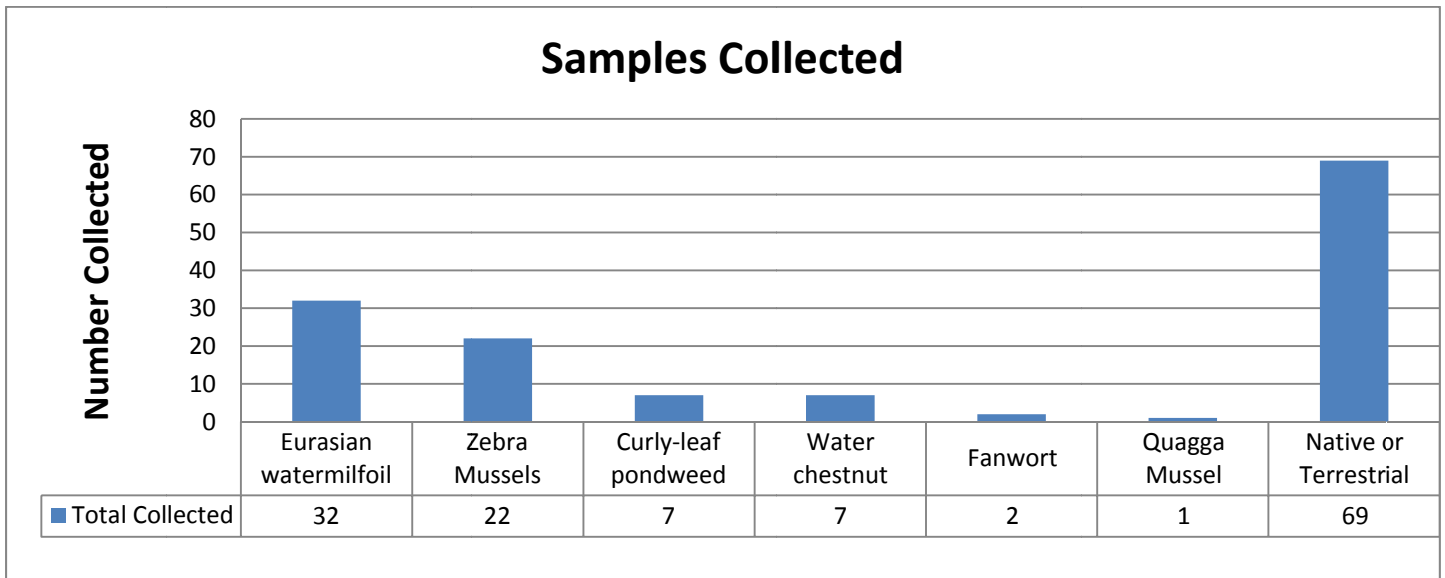


Figure 2: A breakdown of samples collected from boats arriving at inspection stations.

New Invasives Stopped

The plant pictured at right is a sample of Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*), collected by LGPC boat inspectors at the Million Dollar Beach inspection station. It was found on a vessel that had previously visited Lake Boon in Massachusetts. Fanwort is an aggressive invasive species and can cause disruption to aquatic environments, fishing, swimming and boating activity. Most of fanwort's negative impacts are due to its dense foliage. The competitive, vegetative growth also reduces light for benthic organisms and native plants.



The second 'new' invasive species caught by LGPC inspectors prior to launch into Lake George this year is Quagga mussels (pictured right). These small mollusks are similar to zebra mussels, in that they attach to any hard surface and can populate entire lakes over time with billions of mussels covering boats, docks, rocks and any other such hard surface. On infected lakes, these mussels can cause significant problems with water intakes for homes, power generation facilities, public recreation (very sharp shells coating rocks), and water intake/cooling systems for boats. Given the relatively low calcium content in Lake George water, it is not well known if Quagga mussels could thrive in Lake George. However, we will work hard to ensure that we do not have to find out!



Conclusion

Inspection program single-day records were broken at the Million Dollar Beach and Mossy Point sites on July 18th, with both sites completing 246 inspections. Record-breaking activity, near-record summer high temperatures, and the added stress of working with the public during a national health pandemic have made for a difficult season for the inspection staff. Credit is due to these dedicated individuals who continue to maintain a high standard through challenging conditions. LGPC vessel inspection technicians are very diligent about finding possible new invasive species, even discovering smaller plant fragments and small attached mussels.

The Lake George boat inspection program runs until November 1st of each year. A final, comprehensive year-end report is produced annually in late November/early December and will be provided to all interested parties, and posted on the Commission website.

The Commission thanks Kristen Wilde of the Lake George Association for her considerable time spent identifying and confirming the samples collected from boats this year. As always, the Commission thanks our funding

partners who provide the financial resources that make this program possible, including NYS, Warren County, the towns of Queensbury, Bolton, Lake George, and the Village, the Lake George Association and the Fund for Lake George. Without their support, this program would not exist.

For questions on this program, email info@lgpc.state.ny.us.