

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
AMONG PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS REGARDING  
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION IN THE ADIRONDACK REGION**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to describe an understanding among the diverse undersigned organizations representing state agencies, municipal governments, property owners, lake associations, conservation groups, and businesses regarding a program to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species in the Adirondack region. This MOU is not a binding commitment, but rather a statement of the intent of undersigned parties to work together in good faith, subject to the requirements of SEQRA and the availability of lawful appropriations and funding, to create an effective program in the Adirondack region that recognizes the following:

- The Adirondack region possesses one of the largest natural assemblages of valuable and vulnerable waterways in North America, including 3,000 lakes and ponds, and 30,000 miles of rivers and streams that represent the region’s chief economic asset; and
- Based on the most recent monitoring data from the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program and partners, the region is experiencing infestations of no less than 18 aquatic invasive and non-native species, and infestations pose a threat to the ecological health and economic future of the Adirondacks; and
- Nearly 200 aquatic invasive and non-native species exist in close proximity to the region including, as of 2011, 184 in the Great Lakes, 122 in the Hudson River, 49 in Lake Champlain, and 87 in the St. Lawrence River. Although a majority of these species are not spread by watercraft, this MOU pertains to those that may be introduced through the use of the same boat in different waterbodies as a means of transporting an aquatic invasive species; and
- The aquatic invasive species which may enter the region’s waterways or spread within the region include plants such as Hydrilla, Eurasian watermilfoil, and Water chestnut, and animals such as Quagga mussels, Asian clams, spiny waterflea , Zebra mussels, and pathogens – viral hemorrhagic septicemia; and
- Aquatic invasive species can spread through various means at different life stages including through boats in bilge waters, ballast waters, live well waters, anchors and in live bait containers often when they are in their juvenile, microscopic form; and
- A recent report commissioned by the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program entitled “The Actual and Potential Economic Impact of Invasive Species on the Adirondack Park: A Preliminary Assessment” very conservatively estimated that the spread of just eight high risk invasive species, including four aquatic invasive species, could result in an annual

loss of \$48 to \$53 million to recreation & tourism, agriculture, and forestry sectors in the Park with a long-term loss of \$420 to \$840 million to lake shore property values; and

- A 2012 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service publication states that just one aquatic invasive plant, Eurasian watermilfoil, reduced Vermont lakefront property values up to 16 percent and Wisconsin lakefront property values by 13 percent. That report also states that the cost of damage from invasive species in the United States exceeds \$120 billion annually; and
- Very few invasive species can be eradicated once established and control often involves costly actions implemented and underwritten in perpetuity without achieving the objective of eradication; and
- The draft NYS AIS Management Plan released in October, 2014 for public comment has stated the overarching goal of stopping the introduction and spread of AIS into and within New York's waters. The Plan includes strategies and actions for improving prevention, detection, response, and agency capacity to manage AIS; and
- Aquatic invasive species spread prevention depends on a variety of strategies including inspection and removal of visible vegetation; thorough decontamination of watercraft and mandatory "Clean, Drained, and Dry (or decontaminated)" programs; and
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation ("NYSDEC") is currently developing regulations which will be effective statewide to assist in the efforts to minimize the spread of aquatic invasive species by incorporating reasonable precautions boaters shall take prior to launching a watercraft or a floating dock. These regulations will be in addition to the existing Department's regulation for the prevention of the spread of AIS at DEC boat launch sites, specifically Parts 59 and 190, and the regulations which provide for the protection of waters found in Part 608 of the Department's regulations, and furthermore, NYSDEC has existing signage addressing AIS at its sites; and
- Trailered boats are an important vector for the overland transport of aquatic invasive species from one waterbody to another. It is also well documented that investment in spread prevention of aquatic invasive species can be achieved at a fraction of the cost of managing subsequent infestations and avoids environmental damage associated with physical and chemical control actions; and
- Viable boat inspection, self-certification programs and decontamination programs have been established in New York State and other parts of the country with documented results in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species; and
- The Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program at Lake George is a 2-year pilot program implemented in 2014 that featured a partnership with State agencies and shared public/private investment to underwrite operations. More than 19,000 trailered boats

were inspected and over 1,300 boats were decontaminated in its first season of operation. Nearly 150 cases of visible invasive species were “caught,” including Eurasian watermilfoil, Asian clams and Zebra mussels. Detailed evaluation of the program will be forthcoming at the conclusion of the pilot program but lessons learned from the Lake George program can be applied to invasive species prevention programs throughout the Adirondacks; and

- The Adirondack Watershed Institute Stewardship Program has been in place since 2000 with strong public support that provides a natural region-wide network for an expanded prevention program throughout the Adirondacks featuring full inspection and decontamination capacity for local municipalities and lake associations; and
- Recreational boating and fishing provides an annual economic impact of \$ 5.79 billion and \$ 1.9 billion dollars respectively on an annual basis to New York State and is an important component of the tourism based economy of the Adirondacks. Given the importance of boating and fishing to the economic well-being of the Adirondacks, any inspection, self-certification and/or decontamination programs will be done in such a way that does not unduly restrict these activities; and
- Fishing and boating are activities that are not restricted to a specific portion of the day or year. Anglers for example, prefer to get on the water early to avoid other recreational boaters or late to fish for species such as walleye that are most effectively caught during low light periods.

#### **NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY**

**AGREED** that the undersigned public and private entities support the efforts of the undersigned municipalities and interested parties to develop a new region-wide aquatic invasive species prevention program that may include stewardship and data collection, infrastructure and administration, subject to the availability of funding, for boat inspection and when necessary, decontamination, in order to protect water quality, public enjoyment and economic value to the maximum extent practicable by proactively preventing the introduction of new, and the spread of existing, aquatic invasive species in Adirondack waters; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities support the development and implementation of a regional policy of “Clean, Drained, and Dry (or decontaminated)” standard for all boats entering and exiting the region, applied to both launching and retrieving watercraft where possible, subject to SEQRA for actions by public entities; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities who do not currently have signage in place intend to develop, where appropriate, consistent signage in collaboration with appropriate State agencies, to inform boaters on both the threat of invasive species and prevention methods,

including a "Clean, Drained and, Dry (or decontaminated) standard for transport and launching of watercraft; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities will further coordinate and evaluate i) the need for trailered boats entering and exiting the region to be assessed by inspection to determine compliance with a "Clean, Drained, and Dry (or decontaminated) " standard, ii) whether launching or retrieving, that all boats and trailers not meeting the standard are to be decontaminated with high pressure, hot water or other appropriate decontamination methodology; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities intend to cooperate with each other, to support an expanded aquatic invasive species prevention program throughout the Adirondack Park which complies with NYSDEC regulations, to explore ways to fund inspection and decontamination stations for installation at strategic high risk locations, including major entry points to the Adirondack Park, areas of user convenience, invasion spread hubs and identify the most suitable locations for such inspection stations within the Park with reference to the report, "Boat Inspection and Decontamination for Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention; Recommendations for the Adirondack Region", and other sites as required to provide optimal coverage and spread prevention; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities intend to work with appropriate authorities on a plan to implement an inspection certification program to designate boats that have been determined to meet the "Clean, Drained, and Dry (or decontaminated)" standard or which have been decontaminated and have not been launched in another waterbody; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities intend to work together to establish a training program for volunteers to staff and operate the inspection and decontamination stations; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities intend to prepare Memoranda of Understanding with marinas, motels, and launch facilities in order to implement the protocol for complying with "Clean, Drained, and Dry (or decontaminated)"; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities recognize the importance of the State of New York properties and the ability to launch from these sites that provide public access, and that the NYSDEC has regulations in place to manage and minimize the entry and exit for aquatic invasive species introduction and spread at these publically owned sites; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said entities believe this serious threat to the ecological and economic health of the Adirondack region, through negative impacts to water quality and infrastructure, tourism revenues and property values, constitutes the need for the undersigned to cooperatively develop a reasonable protocol to follow at the earliest possible time, with the 2015 boating season as the target date; and it is further

**AGREED** that the said private entities, local municipalities and state agencies who are signatories to this MOU intend to work together to identify and develop opportunities to obtain public grants subject to lawful appropriations and private grants in order to support the development and implementation of a region-wide aquatic invasive species spread prevention and decontamination program in a similar manner as has been successfully demonstrated by the efforts at Lake George and by emerging local programs established by a growing number of lake associations; and it is further

**AGREED** that this Memorandum of Understanding may be signed in counterparts.