

## **Tonawanda Creek Water Chestnut Rapid Response Effort**

### **Summary:**

On August 10, 2008 the Lower Great Lakes Fishery Resources Office (LGLFRO) led the first removal effort for water chestnut recently discovered in Tonawanda Creek. Partners from Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (WNYPRISM), the Army Corps of Engineers - Buffalo District, and the public all assisted in the removal effort. The Erie County Parks and Recreation Department provided logistical support and disposal for the harvested plants.

Despite periods of heavy rain, 17 volunteers and staff pulled 1,881 pounds of water chestnut in about 3 hours of work. This tremendous effort made a sizeable impact on the north side of the park pedestrian bridge, but plants to the south of the bridge could not be pulled due to weather cancellation. We estimate another 2,000-4,000 pounds of plant material remained unpulled on the south side of the bridge. A second pulling event was considered for the fall. Time constraints in logistics and assembling a crew would have delayed the pulling of additional plants. This delay would have resulted in the event being scheduled after seed drop and resulted in renewed growth next year from the seed bank in the sediment. Therefore, no additional effort was made this season.

It is unclear how this population became established since the next closest population is approximately 100 miles to the east; however a human vector seems likely. These plants were found in a county park, an area frequented by those in canoes and kayaks. There has also been evidence of previous nuisance aquatic plant harvesting, which could have been a vector. Finally, the location of these plants was adjacent to the navigable portion of the New York State Canal System, through which boat traffic may have been a vector for seeds. Working with the WNYPRISM, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, and other partners, the LGLFRO is planning to coordinate another pull next summer that will cover the entire 6-acre area. Additional surveillance of adjacent areas for several years will be critical to ensure plants have not spread to nearby habitats. Public outreach will also be increased to assist in early detection reporting.

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For additional images and information, see: <http://lowergreatlakes.fws.gov> and click on the "Water chestnut Rapid Response" link