

# Invasives in Lake Lillinonah:

Lake Lillinonah is the host of several aquatic invasive species. The invasive population within Lake Lillinonah is composed of both aquatic plants and animals. The aquatic invasive plant species that inhabit Lake Lillinonah include Eurasian Milfoil , European Water Chestnut , Curly-weed Pond Leaf, and Brittle Water Nymph . None of these species are indigenous to Lake Lillinonah and the Housatonic River watershed, yet they have found their way into Lake



An image that captures how thick and dense the growth of Eurasian Milfoil can be.

Lillinonah and have proven themselves to be harmful to the ecosystem they inhabit. These invasive species are harmful to Lake Lillinonah's ecosystem because they displace and reduce native plant diversity because of their ability to withstand lower temperatures leading to them growing earlier in the year. Furthermore, the presence of these invasive species puts a strain on Lake Lillinonah's aquatic ecosystem because of the high loads of vegetation. As these masses of vegetation

complete their life cycle, they begin to decay which can impair water quality by depleting oxygen levels in the water. The effects of low levels of oxygen in water can be harmful to native fish and other aquatic animals. In 2007 a monitoring report was conducted in Lake Lillinonah and found that 116 acres of the lake had been infested with invasive plant growth. The three species that mainly composed these masses of growth include Eurasian Water Milfoil, Brittle Water Nymph and Curly-weed Pond Leaf. Note that European Water Chestnut had not yet been introduced into Lake Lillinonah and since then has taken over much of the waters near the mouth of the Still River in New Milford.



Photograph of Water Chestnut near the opening of the Still River in New Milford before being pulled by volunteers.

The issue with invasive species in Lake Lillionah is not limited to aquatic plants. Zebra mussels, an invasive animal, have continued to plague Lake Lillionah since their discovery in 2009. Zebra mussels are a type of mollusk that grow on underwater structures. They are D-shaped and grow to be around one inch long and have distinct yellow and brown stripes. These mussels are more effective at reproducing than mussels native to North America because their larvae are free swimming and do not need to attach to a host fish when growing to their adult stage. They are not only harmful because they outperform native mussels in reproducing, but they also cause major problems for other native animals, boat engines, and docks. Zebra mussels are very good at attaching to surfaces and that can include native animals such as crayfish. The shells of Zebra mussels are also very sharp. As a result of this, when these mussels cover rocks and other shoreline structures they make it difficult for swimmers to enjoy shoreline activities because they risk being cut by the mussels.



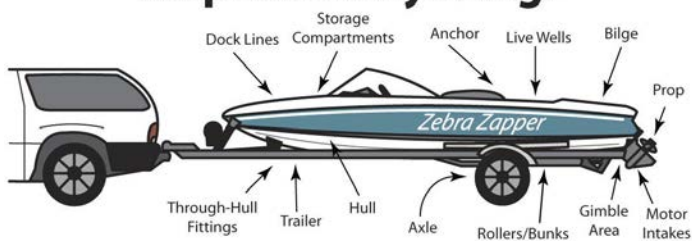
## What You Can Do About It:

The problems that aquatic invasive species cause may seem impossible to fix, but there's a lot that you can do to prevent the spread and help lessen this issue. Invasive species are very effective at taking over new bodies of water once introduced, so to prevent them spreading to other bodies of water those who use Lake Lillionah must be conscious in their effort to prevent these invasive species from leaving the lake. Boaters must completely drain ballasts and water reserves when taking their boat out of Lake Lillionah and inspect

their boat and trailer before leaving and launching. Boat owners should also clean their boat with hot water to wash off any invasives that may have found their way past inspection. Not only should boat owners take these precautionary

Before leaving and before launching...

**inspect everything!**



measures, but those who use kayaks, paddle boards, inflatable tubes and any other water recreational equipment. Those who wish to make even more of a difference I urge you to become a member of Friends of the Lake and volunteer at events they hold. Every year there is an event held where volunteers go onto the water and pull European Water Chestnuts. This event has seen the infested area of European Water Chestnut decline and hundreds of pounds of Water Chestnut taken out of Lake Lillinonah. While it might be impossible to completely eradicate the population of invasive species, with the measures described above it is not impossible to stop the spread of invasive species and the current population can decrease significantly.



A photo taken in the same spot as the photo depicting water chestnut growth, after efforts to remove the vegetation