

For Immediate Release

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### **June is Water Chestnut Awareness Month on Lake Hopatcong**

LAKE HOPATCONG – It's green and leafy, with stringy stems and a seed that is surrounded by a hard shell with sharp barbs. It has the potential to overtake entire coves, killing the aquatic ecosystem and making boating nearly impossible. And it's not related to the item you find in Chinese food, despite the shared name. It's the **water chestnut**, and it's something all Lake Hopatcong residents and boaters should be on the lookout for.

The water chestnut is an invasive species that has taken over lake habitats all around the region, and nearly could have done so to Lake Hopatcong in 2010 if not for the efforts of the Knee Deep Club Water Scouts, which scoured the shorelines, searching for any instance of the plant. One colony was found by a Water Scout in Landing Channel and removed that year, and it has not been found since, though the annual search has continued every year.

The reason the plant is of such concern is because of its ability to take over an entire water ecosystem, growing from a persistent seed (particularly in shallow, low-turbulence areas) to a stringy plant with large rosettes of two-inch arrowhead-shaped leaves. The rosettes can quickly multiply, and before long the water chestnut can take over the surface of an area, clogging up channels for recreation and choking out other aquatic life. Further, the seed pods on the lake bottom are barbed with sharp points, making it very painful for anyone who might step on them.

Because the plants begin to show in June, but the seeds don't drop until July or August, it's best to catch any instances of the water chestnut early, which is why June has been named Water Chestnut Awareness Month on Lake Hopatcong.

The water chestnut seed can be transported by boats, trailers, and other equipment, so it is essential that any items be thoroughly inspected and washed between trips to different water bodies. It can also be transported by water fowl, so even with the best efforts at lake entry points, the search must continue.

This year, the Knee Deep Club Water Scout effort has shifted to the Lake Hopatcong Foundation, which held its first training session on Wednesday, May 22 at the LHF offices on Nolan's Point in Lake Hopatcong. Two more on-the-water trainings are scheduled for Friday, June 7 and Saturday, June 29 – anyone who is interested in being a part of the Water Scout team should email [donna@lakehopatcongfoundation.org](mailto:donna@lakehopatcongfoundation.org).

And more than anything, it's important for the community be acquainted with what the water chestnut looks like, and report any sightings of the plant. If you see the plant, please report it to the Lake Hopatcong Foundation (973-663-2500; [lhenviro@lakehopatcongfoundation.org](mailto:lhenviro@lakehopatcongfoundation.org)), Knee Deep Club (908-415-2895; [tim.clancy@verizon.net](mailto:tim.clancy@verizon.net)), and/or the Rutgers Cooperative Extension (973-285-8300, ext. 225; [rector@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:rector@njaes.rutgers.edu)).

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Photo attached: Water Chesnut rosette