



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

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**SCHUMER: RECENT DISCOVERY OF 27 ACRE
AREA OF HYDRILLA IN CAYUGA LAKE MEANS
INVASIVE SPECIES COULD SOON CONQUER
WATERWAYS; SENATOR PUSHES FOR
CRITICAL FED FUNDS TO HELP ERADICATE
INVASIVE SPECIES ONCE AND FOR ALL**

*Senator Says Once Again Hydrilla Weeds Have Begun Showing Up In
Finger Lakes Region – Plant Could Put A Stranglehold On Finger
Lakes, Turning Away Fishing, Boating, Other Lake-Based Recreation In
Region Worth Millions To Upstate Economy*

*In Letters to EPA & US Fish and Wildlife Service, Schumer Calls for
\$850,000 in Federal Funding and the Support for Long-Term Plan To
Eradicate Weed & Keep It From Coming Back*

Schumer: We Can't Allow Hydrilla To Take Root In Seneca County

U.S. Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer today called on the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to immediately approve nearly \$1 million in federal funding to apply herbicide needed to remove a large recently discovered Hydrilla infestation in Cayuga Lake and to support a comprehensive, multi-year strategy to combat the invasive species that threatens to do serious damage to Cayuga Lake and surrounding lakes.

“If Hydrilla takes root it will grow at record speed, leaving millions in economic damage to Cayuga Lake in its wake. We cannot let that happen,” said **Senator Schumer**. “Seneca County and the Finger Lakes region generates millions in economic activity, in large part due to the tourists, boaters, and fisherman who visit these true treasures every year. A single aquatic plant could put all of that at risk, which is why I’m calling on the federal government to roll up their sleeves and fast-track the release of nearly \$1

million in desperately needed federal aid. Our options are clear, we can either spend a small amount of money in the fight now, or millions down the road when it may be too late.”

To address the Hydrilla threat, Schumer has thrown his full weight behind the Finger Lakes Institute, and two proposals to the federal government for funding to combat Hydrilla at the beginning of the year. The first proposal submitted by the Finger Lakes institute sent to the EPA and it requested \$598,960 for invasive species control for Hydrilla in New York’s Great Lakes Basin. This funding would provide for a full time project manager, survey crew, full time watercraft steward coverage at Long Point State Park, funds for control and to apply treatments to eradicate Hydrilla (\$170,000) which was the control estimate at the time over two years), and funds for outreach by a number of partners. This would cover Hydrilla control during the 2017-2018 control seasons.

In addition, Schumer expressed his support for DEC’s proposal, which requested \$249,992 of GLRI funds administered by the Finger lakes- Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance to continue to fulfill the goals and objectives outlined in the Statewide “Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Comprehensive Management Plan” within the Great Lakes watershed. This second project would provide control and management of Hydrilla for the 2018 control season. Schumer noted that GLRI has pursued a “zero tolerance” policy when it comes to new invasive species, and called for the funding to follow through with this commitment.

Hydrilla, a fast-growing aquatic plant that can choke off waterways and make boating and fishing nearly impossible, has recently conquered a 27 acre area in Cayuga Lake. • The Shallow Northern part of Cayuga Lake where we are standing today is prime habitat for the fast-growing, Hydrilla, to flourish and overrun the ecosystem, at which point control of the Northern end of Cayuga Lake will be futile. The plant can grow six to eight inches per day and could spread throughout the Finger Lakes if federal and regional officials do not act to prevent and eradicate the invasive weed’s presence. Schumer said Hydrilla poses a serious and costly threat to the vitality, natural beauty, and economic stability of the Seneca and the surrounding Finger Lakes Region. The presence of Hydrilla would reduce values of shorefront properties, harm water quality, and pose a major threat to tourism in the Finger Lakes. Given that tourism contributes \$286 million to Finger Lakes Counties and supports more than 6,000 local jobs, the continued spread of Hydrilla will prove disastrous to local communities in the region without action.

In December, a Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom found a Hydrilla patch in different areas in Cayuga Lake, beyond the Hydrilla that had been identified in the inlet located at the southern end of the lake in 2012. The Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management has conducted surveys that have discovered 27 acres of patchy Hydrilla. Research has revealed that this infestation is five years old. Until now, most of the focus had been directed to the Hydrilla in the inlet, near the Ithaca area. Schumer has called for vigorous action to combat the Hydrilla that has spread in other parts of the lake. This action will require immediate support and funds from the federal government. Schumer vowed to push the EPA and FWS to continue protecting the environmental stability of the Finger Lakes Region.

Schumer has frequently cited the Hydrilla problem in the State of Florida as evidence for the need to enact a long-term plan now, as hydrilla is extremely difficult and expensive to remove.

Florida failed to address the Hydrilla problem early and now spends approximately \$30 million per year to mow Hydrilla plants throughout their waterways.

Schumer said combatting Hydrilla will require resources and federal assistance. The effort to combat Hydrilla will require chemical treatment to inhibit future tuber growth and formation (\$175,000 per year); chemical treatment to prevent Hydrilla fragments and turions from spreading and producing additional populations; monitoring of the plant communities, (\$21,000 per year); coordination of the project (\$67,500 per year); and public outreach and communication including targeted marketing and workshops (\$11,000).

In addition, Schumer also noted that the EPA and FWS' ability to help the Finger Lakes Region is in jeopardy due to the Trump Administration's budget proposal, which would eliminate the GLRI. As this case of Hydrilla demonstrates, GLRI has been a key source of funding to combat invasive species and other environmental dangers in the past. Schumer vowed to use all the power he has to protect the program from the Administration's budget butchers.

Schumer was joined by **Lisa Cleckner** Director of the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

Lisa Cleckner Director of the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges said, "This Federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding is vital to stop the spread of the invasive Hydrilla aquatic plant before it spreads throughout Cayuga Lake and potentially to the Great Lakes. The discovery six months ago of a second infestation of Hydrilla that covers 27 acres of the Cayuga Lake bottom is an alarming wake-up call. We are dependent on resources like GLRI to enable us to apply timely treatments this summer to stop the further spread of Hydrilla and to help ensure that other areas of the lake are not infested. We greatly appreciate Senator Schumer's support of these efforts."

Schumer has long been for an advocate for the Finger Lakes Restoration and the GLRI. In 2012, Schumer successfully fought to release \$380,000 in federal GLRI funding for the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District to fight Hydrilla. In addition, Schumer brought the EPA, the USACE and the FWS together for a meeting to establish a plan of attack to address the Hydrilla problem in the Finger Lakes Region.

Copies of Senator Schumer's letters to the EPA and the FWS are included below:

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

I am pleased to write in support of the application submitted by the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) at Hobart and William Smith Colleges for funding through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Invasive Species Control grants program. Such funding will enable FLI to help protect and enhance the ecosystem integrity of the GL Basin through control of a high risk infestation from Cayuga Lake.

Through a mixture of eradication, education, and outreach, the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges goal is to prevent the further spread of Hydrilla in Cayuga Lake, the other Finger Lakes, and the Great Lakes. Hydrilla is the world's most successful aquatic invasive plant, rapidly spreading and causing severe impacts to water quality, native plant and fish communities, recreation, irrigation, and water treatment facilities.

With funding, FLI will target thirty acres of Hydrilla for control offshore from Aurora, NY and strategically targeted areas at high risk for invasion will use mobile teams to survey for new Hydrilla populations. High risk locations will include areas along Lake Ontario and embayments, and neighboring bodies of water in close proximity to the current Hydrilla infestation within the Finger Lakes. I applaud the FLI for its foresight, and sincerely hope the application meets with your approval.

Sincerely,
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

The Honorable Jim Kurth
Acting Director
United States fish and wildlife service

Dear Acting Director Kurth:

I am pleased to write in support of a \$249,992 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant application being submitted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife to combat invasive aquatic species, including Hydrilla, in the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes watershed.

This funding is needed to implement the goals and objectives outlined in New York's Statewide "Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Comprehensive Management Plan" within the Great Lakes watershed. Namely, this funding will be will be administered through the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance for control and management of aquatic invasive species. The funding will be used to conduct on-water surveys for high propriety species of concern and to fund herbicide applications or removal of invasive species like Hydrilla, Water Chestnut and Asian Clam. The funding will also support the Watercraft Steward Program which hires and stations stewards at municipal boat launches and related areas in the Finger Lakes. These stewards will visually inspect watercraft, as well as conduct surveys and provide education based best practices to limit the spread, transmission, and presence of aquatic invasive species within the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes watershed.

This funding is critical to stop and prevent the further spread of Hydrilla particularly in Cayuga Lake. Late last year an outbreak of Hydrilla was discovered across nearly 30 acres along the mid-eastern shore of Cayuga Lake. Hydrilla is the world's most successful aquatic invasive plant, spreads rapidly, and causes severe impact to water quality, native plant and fish communities, recreation, irrigation, and water treatment facilities. As such, it is imperative to control its spread, particularly since the shallow Northern shelf of Cayuga Lake (5,800 acres) is prime habitat for the fast-growing, highly competitive Hydrilla to flourish and overrun the ecosystem. I applaud the New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation for its foresight and success and hope its application for funding meets with your approval.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

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