2025

FINGER LAKES PRISM ANNUAL REPORT

Photo Credit: Catherine Farrell

HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH

FINGER LAKES INSTITUTE

PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT FINGER LAKES

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INTRODUCTION

Vision

Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) preserves the biodiversity of our natural communities through the prevention, detection, and control of invasive species.

Mission

Our mission is to reduce the introduction, spread, and impact of invasive species by working collaboratively with partners to implement effective education, outreach, and control measures.

Summary

This report highlights key accomplishments for the Finger Lakes PRISM between January and December 2025. This year was most notably marked by the announcement of a new contract to host the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management, which runs from 2025 through 2028. We are grateful for the support of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to host this important program.

The new contract brought a series of updates to staffing, structure, programming, and more. For the new contract, four full-time staff positions were funded in addition the coordinator. These positions include an Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager, a Terrestrial Invasive Species Program Manager, an Education and Outreach Program Manager, and an Aquatic Invasive Species Fieldwork Coordinator.

Significant programmatic shifts included centralizing citizen science programs as well as the Watercraft Inspection Steward Program under the Education and Outreach program. This shift offers opportunities for capacity building and efficiencies across our educational programs including citizen science as well as deeper focus for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem efforts.

Our new FL PRISM team is eager to continue working with partners throughout the Finger Lakes to make meaningful progress in managing invasive species.

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INTRODUCTION

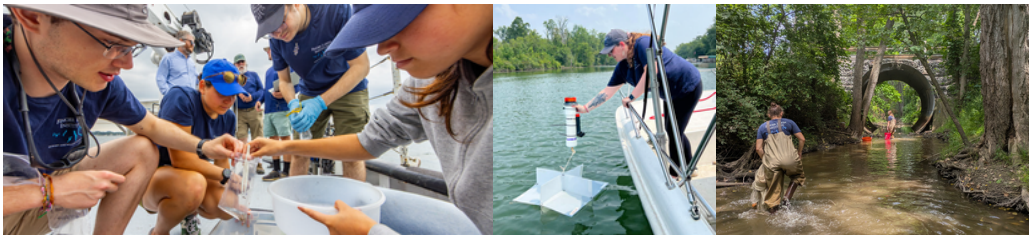
HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

FINGER LAKES INSTITUTE

The Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) strives to protect and promote the water resources and natural capital of the Finger Lakes region. We connect HWS academic activities to needs and stakeholders locally, statewide, and regionally. The FLI provides 1) relevant, actionable scientific analysis for the region; 2) research and professional development opportunities for students, faculty, and staff; and 3) a place for community education about existing and emerging water quality issues through focused goals:

- ***Advance, coordinate, and share scientific data and understanding of the Finger Lakes environment;***
- ***Provide equitable, meaningful professional experiences for the next generation of environmental researchers, educators, and policymakers at HWS and beyond;***
- ***Enhance understanding of environmental issues by regional policymakers and the public;***
- ***Support the economic foundation of the Finger Lakes region through comprehensive land use planning, policy development, and sustainable enterprise;***
- ***Promote regional equity by creating and increasing access to educational resources for all community partners including Finger Lakes region residents, K-12 teachers and students, HWS, and other regional colleges and universities.***

Finger Lakes Institute Invasive Species team includes: Sam Beck-Andersen, Finger Lakes PRISM Coordinator; Lydia Martin, Terrestrial Invasive Species Program Manager; Catherine Farrell, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Manager; Laurel Williams, Education and Outreach Program Manager; Claire McMahon, AIS Field Coordinator; Lindsey Balman, IS Project Coordinator; Ian Smith, Seneca Lake Watershed Steward; Isaac Walker, Cayuga Lake Watershed Manager; Nadia Harvieux, FLI Associate Director of K-12 Education; Trevor Massey, Lab Manager; Josh Neff, Lab and Fieldwork Coordinator; Lisa Cleckner, Director, Finger Lakes Institute.



GOAL 1: PREVENTION

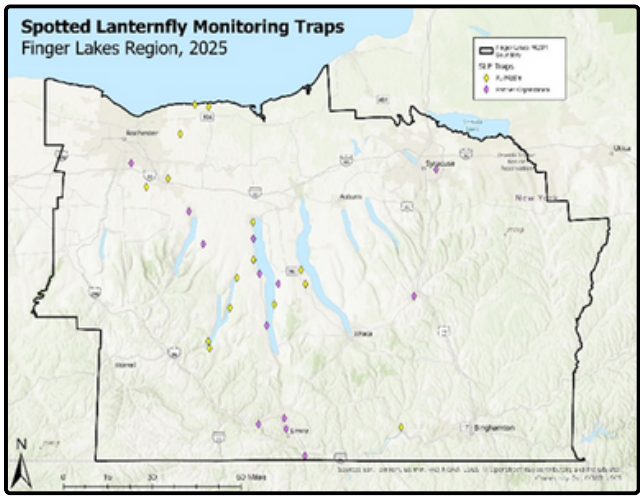
"Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species (IS) to new areas within the region through targeted prevention efforts for vectors and pathways of transmission."

Finger Lakes PRISM recognizes prevention as an efficient and effective method for reducing the cost and ecological and human health impacts of invasive species. It is a cornerstone of our programming. Prevention is built into all projects and is the key to our success in the region.

Spotted Lanternfly Monitoring

As spotted lanternfly (SLF)(Lycorma delicatula) continues to spread throughout New York State (NYS), the threat of impacts to agriculture in the Finger Lakes remains a significant concern. As of December 2025, SLF populations have been confirmed in nine counties (Broome, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Seneca, Tioga, Tompkins, Livingston, Cayuga). Finger Lakes PRISM works closely with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to identify goals and strategies for monitoring the spread of SLF throughout the state.

Early detection is the cornerstone of preventing the establishment of the spotted lanternfly , an invasive planthopper that threatens the region's vital grape and timber industries. In 2025, FL-PRISM and six partner organizations deployed 42 traps across high-risk corridors. Over 170 monitoring visits resulted in nearly universal absence records, with only one detection confirmed at a previously known infestation site. These results highlight the value of proactive, targeted monitoring in limiting regional establishment. Looking ahead to 2026, FL-PRISM will redistribute traps to these strategic locations while expanding coverage. By utilizing a new program interest form, we are inviting landowners and regional partners to participate in this frontline defense, ensuring that we detect and contain new populations before they can impact the local economy and ecosystem.



Map of SLF traps distributed to partners throughout the Finger Lakes PRISM region.

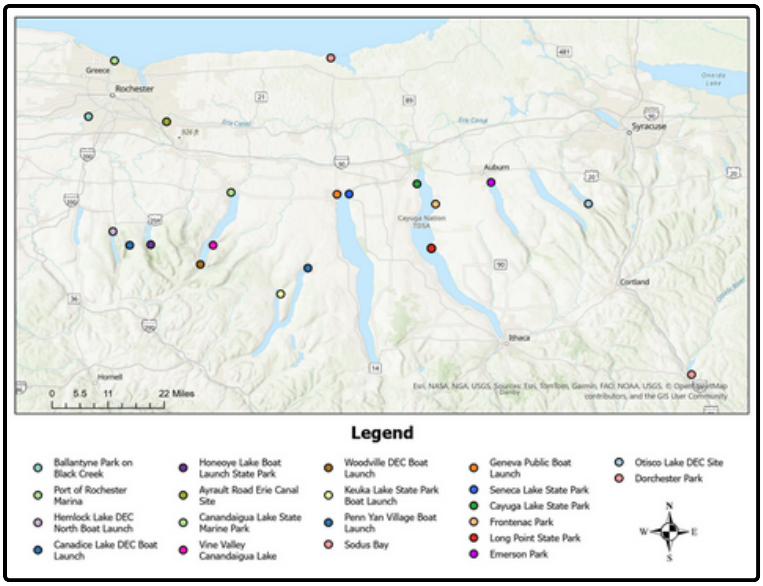
GOAL 1: PREVENTION

Watercraft Inspection Steward Program

The Finger Lakes Watercraft Inspection Steward Program (WISP) is a flagship of invasive species education and surveillance programming for the PRISM and FLI. Stewards conduct thousands of inspections at launches around the Finger Lakes region, which houses headwaters for both the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay.

Stewards have three primary roles: 1) conduct physical and visual watercraft inspections to detect invasive hitchhikers, 2) provide education and outreach about preventing invasive species spread through boating, and 3) collect valuable inspection data to support strategic program development. WISP stewards utilize the Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Application (WISPA), which was developed and is administered by the NYSDEC and the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP).

In 2025, robust recruitment efforts yielded a full team of 23 stewards. The WISP successfully provided valuable prevention efforts to the region from Memorial Day through October at public and private boat launches. Program staff also coordinated the staffing of a decontamination unit at Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park in Canandaigua, NY.



Map of FLI WSP coverage in 2025. All noted launches received at least one day of coverage per week.

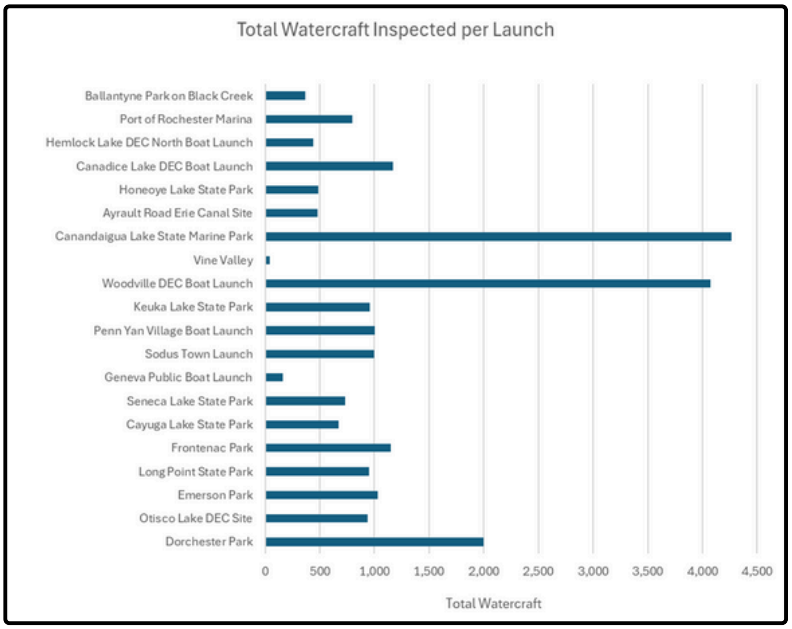
PRISM staff train new stewards at Seneca Lake State Park.

GOAL 1: PREVENTION

Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Cont'd

During the 2025 season, stewards conducted over 26,000 watercraft inspections, and intercepted thousands of invasive organisms, demonstrating the huge potential for stewards to reduce the number of aquatic hitchhikers traveling between waterbodies. The amount and type of boaters that stewards interact with can also help gauge the sustainable impact of education on mitigating invasive species spread. Stewards interacted with over 53,000 community members in 2025 with the vast majority of boaters opting to commit to future invasive species spread prevention behaviors.

A particularly notable achievement of the WISP in 2025 included the detection of hydrilla on Cayuga Lake, and of rusty crayfish on Canandaigua Lake. The hydrilla detection occurred on August 15th at Long Point State Park (Reference Photo), and the rusty crayfish occurred on September 6th at the Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park. Once retrieved, PRISM staff confirmed identification of both species. These findings show how valuable WISPs can be at detecting and reporting high-priority and emerging invasive species.



Total watercraft inspected by Finger Lakes PRISM WISP stewards across all boat launches in 2025.

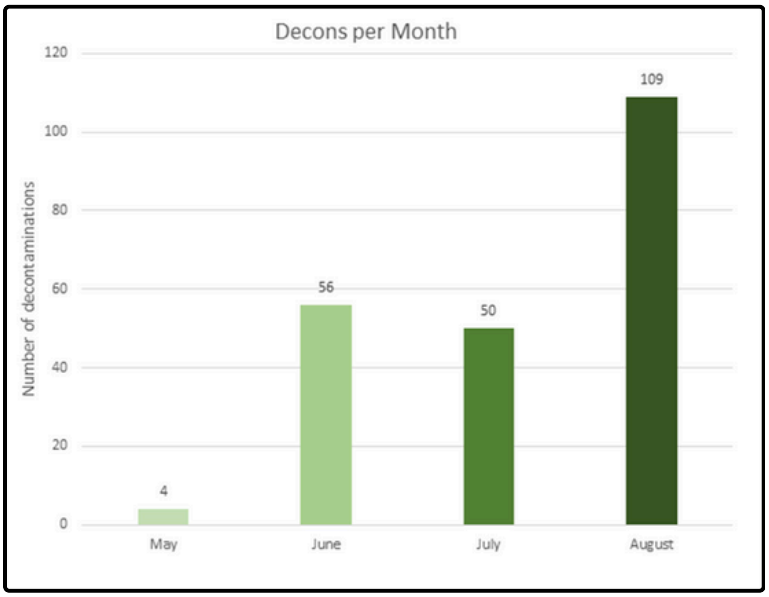
Above: Rusty crayfish (*Faxonius rusticus*) detected by PRISM stewards on Canandaigua Lake.

Left: Hydrilla detected by PRISM stewards on Cayuga Lake.

GOAL 1: PREVENTION

Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Cont'd

During the 2025 season, the decontamination station at Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park was staffed by a trained decontamination steward for 50 workdays from Memorial Day through August. In total, 221 decontaminations were completed. Thirty of those were courtesy washes, meaning the decontamination was not necessary but the boater requested it. The remaining 191 decontaminations were recommended by the decontamination steward due to reasons such as visible AIS or a recent trip to another waterbody. August had the highest number of decontaminations with 109.



Total number of decontaminations conducted by PRISM stewards at Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park in 2025.

Decontamination steward Josh Triou using hot, pressurized water to decontaminate a boat at Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park.

GOAL 1: PREVENTION

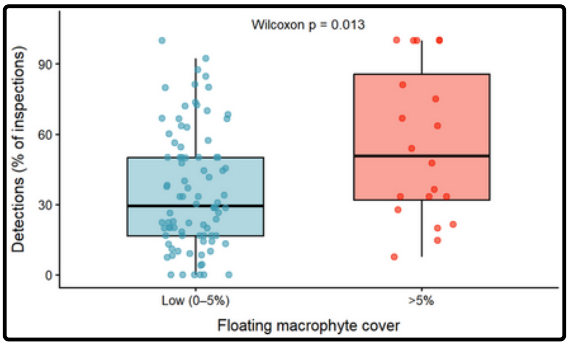
Watercraft Steward Program Cont'd

Additional Funded WISP Partnerships

Since the beginning of the WISP in 2012, partnerships have been key to successfully maintaining and growing a strong steward presence in the region. In 2025, partner organizations continued to support the WISP through contracts to place stewards at key launches. Partners in 2025 included Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council and Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association, Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association. In total, these contracts provided over $60,000 for watercraft steward coverage.

Additional Initiatives

PRISM staff selected multiple launch sites for testing the impact of removing floating plants from a ramp to reduce the plant detections by stewards. Daily at noon the steward on duty removed the floating plants from the launch area with a pool skimmer; the plant species were then identified and the total volume was recorded. Floating plant percent cover was recorded in a survey prior to skimming. These data will be used to explore the relationship between floating macrophytes in the launch and detections on retrieving watercraft, which will inform future management techniques to increase the impact of stewards.



Comparison of aquatic plant detection rates during watercraft inspections at launches with low versus high floating macrophyte cover. Points represent individual survey days and boxes show the median and interquartile range.

Watercraft Steward Program Key Outputs

- *23 stewards, 1 AIS fieldwork coordinator*
- *26,788 watercraft inspected*
- *Over 50,000 interactions with people during inspections*
- *20 launches covered on 14 waterbodies*
- *96% of participating boaters committed to Clean, Drain, and Dry their watercraft to avoid transporting AIS, with 13,073 of those being new commitments*
- *2,059 invasive organisms detected by watercraft stewards*
- *221 decontaminations completed at Canandaigua Lake State Marine Park Decontamination Station*

GOAL 1: PREVENTION

Education and Outreach

Providing education and outreach is a critical method for preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species. PRISM staff lead and participate in a variety of events across the region to inform and shape the way people think about invasive species, the natural environment and communities in general. We focus on providing general awareness about invasive species and equipping volunteers and participants with tools to address invasive species on a regional scale. We also bring stakeholders together and facilitate conversations and actions in meetings. These conversations help us learn about localized issues and priorities of our partners. They also serve to identify important topics for future trainings, new projects, and recruiting new partners. In 2025, trainings and workshops were held both virtually and in person.

Key Outputs

- *9 trainings (121 people)*
- *6 tabling events (595 people)*
- *28 presentations delivered (1,022 people)*
- *9 workshops (193 people)*
- *3 meetings hosted (62 people)*
- *Over 1,500 Facebook followers and 809 Instagram followers; almost 350,000 impressions on Nextdoor*

From top left, clockwise: HWS student volunteer participating in an SLF egg scraping event; Finger Lakes PRISM Staff set up for a tabling event; Finger Lakes PRISM staff and partners gathering for the annual Fall Partner Meeting on Hobart and William Smith Colleges campus.

OUTCOME: New invasions to the region are prevented to the greatest extent practicable.

GOAL 2: EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

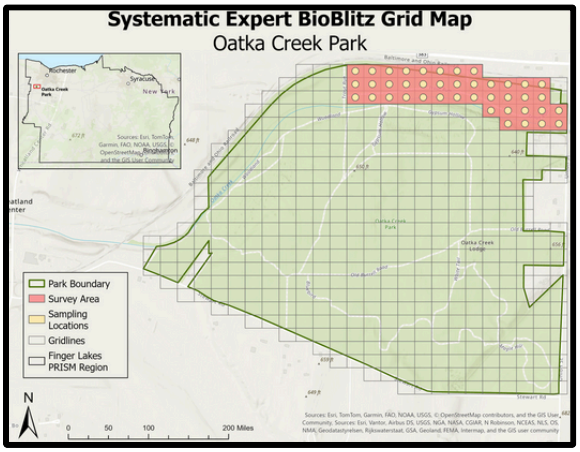
"Implement early detection and rapid response measures to identify new IS to the area and respond to mitigate the effects."

Early detection and rapid response (ED/RR) are critical to controlling the spread of invasive species and managing impacts. The Finger Lakes PRISM engages in multiple ED programs regionally. Our technical staff work diligently through the year to identify existing and emerging populations of high-priority invasive species. With a region spanning 17 counties and 7.3 million acres, detecting invasive species across all landscapes in the Finger Lakes PRISM is challenging.

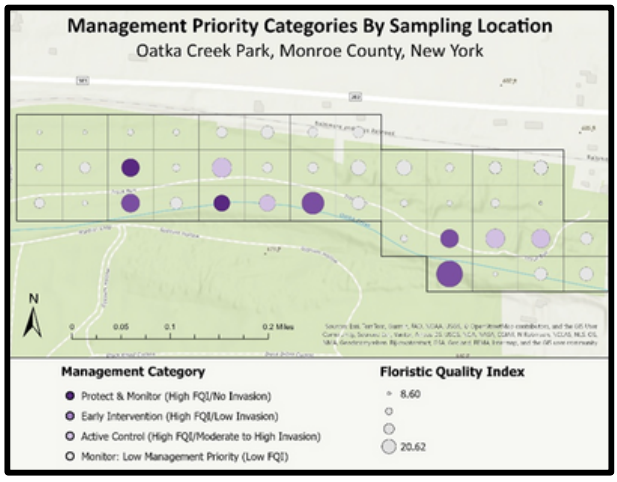
Terrestrial Surveys

Oatka Creek Park BioBlitz

The Finger Lakes PRISM conducted a systematic expert BioBlitz to establish baseline plant community conditions within the Northeastern floodplain at Oatka Creek Park, located in Wheatland, NY. This 44-acre floodplain forest was prioritized due to recent canopy loss from emerald ash borer and increasing understory invasive species. Using a spatially distributed sampling design, 7.4 acres were surveyed across 41 standardized locations. A total of 1,038 records were collected during the BioBlitz. In total, 242 species were documented, including 157 native and 84 non-native species. Species occurrence, floristic quality, and invasive species distribution data were used to quantify spatial variation in plant community condition and identify areas where targeted invasive species management and restoration efforts can be most effectively focused.



Left: Map of Oatka Creek Park



Right: Map of priority areas at Oatka Creek, including management suggestions for each priority zone.

GOAL 2: EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

Terrestrial Surveys Cont'd

Spotted Lanternfly and Tree of Heaven Surveys

In 2025, the Terrestrial Invasive Species (TIS) team prioritized the development of a standardized monitoring workflow for the spotted lanternfly . Recognizing a regional need for more structured guidance and data-driven outreach for the general public, the program focused on establishing a baseline through the systematic mapping of Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), the primary host plant for SLF. Rather than conducting broad, uncoordinated searches, the team partnered with local vineyards to survey specific high-risk perimeters. This strategic approach allowed FL-PRISM to build valuable relationships with the agricultural community while creating a precise "touchstone" dataset to focus future SLF monitoring where it is most likely to occur.

This targeted framework proved highly effective in the field. Throughout the season, the team surveyed 55.31 miles of trails and vineyard perimeters across 19 distinct sites. This proactive surveillance led to the identification and immediate control of three new SLF populations in Ovid, NY. In total, the TIS team successfully removed 403 spotted lanternflies using specialized vacuum treatments across five sites. By centering our efforts on host-plant density within vineyard-rich areas, we have replaced a general "look everywhere" strategy with a repeatable workflow. This approach not only improves our detection rates but also provides the regional wine industry and the public with a more sophisticated, reliable defense against this significant economic and ecological threat.

Spotted lanternfly populations on grapevines in Ovid, NY.

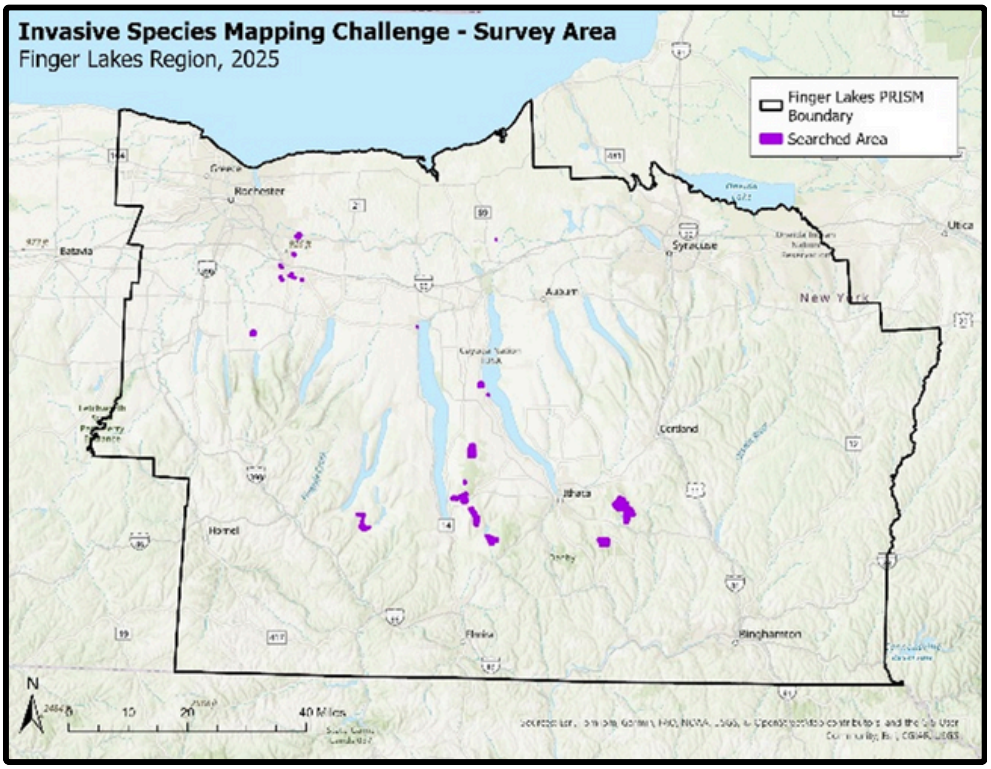
GOAL 2: EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

Terrestrial Surveys Cont'd

High-Priority Species Mapping

As part of the annual iMapInvasives Mapping Challenge, the Terrestrial Invasive Species (TIS) team focused on identifying emerging threats to improve regional distribution data and inform early detection and rapid response efforts. In 2025, the team prioritized high-use protected areas, surveying 63.55 miles of trails across 31 sites to bridge critical data gaps in these ecologically sensitive locations. This systematic monitoring targeted a suite of high-priority species, including Amur corktree, mile-a-minute vine, Ravenna grass, and golden oyster mushroom.

Through these efforts, the team recorded 39 presence points and confirmed the presence of Beech Leaf Disease (BLD), Asian jumping worms, elm zigzag sawfly, and wild parsnip. These findings are vital for management prioritization, as they provide real-time updates to the iMapInvasives database regarding the expanding footprint of forest pests like BLD and the elm zigzag sawfly. By documenting these occurrences in high-traffic protected zones, the TIS team ensures that land managers have the precise data necessary to coordinate future monitoring and mitigate the long-term impact of these invaders on the Finger Lakes landscape.



Locations where TIS Technicians conducted surveys for high-priority invasive species.

GOAL 2: EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

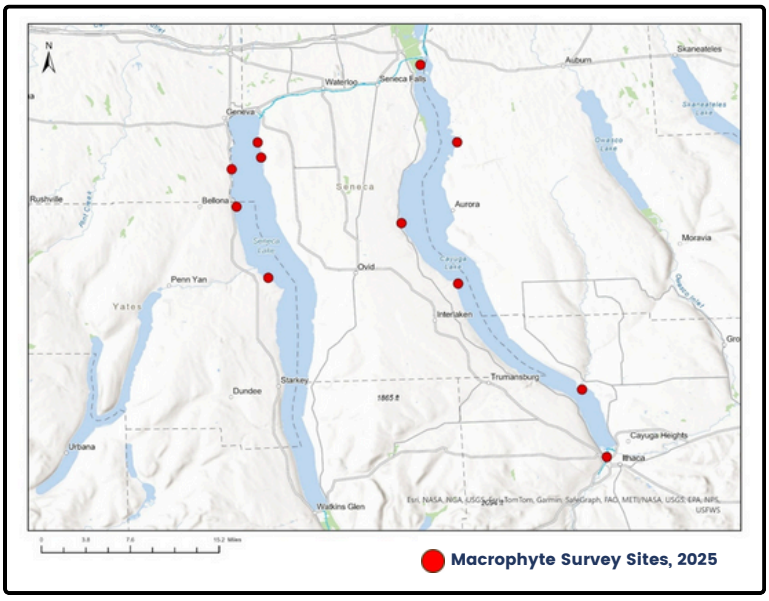
Aquatic Surveys

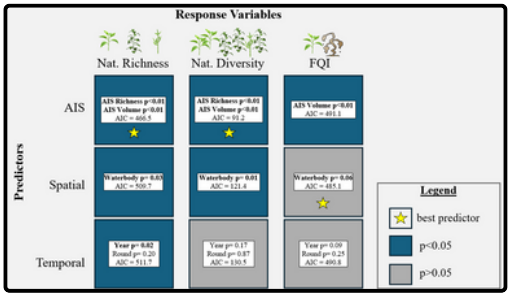
Seasonal Surveys

The Finger Lakes and surrounding waterbodies are home to many aquatic invasive species, including some that hold statewide significance beyond their local impacts. To address the need for rapidly responding to invasives early in their invasion cycle, macrophyte surveys are conducted at key locations throughout the FL-PRISM region.

For the surveys, technicians collected information about the presence or absence of invasive and native macrophyte species. These surveys offer an opportunity to learn a great deal about local plant communities at various habitats within and between lakes. Plant volumes and abundances are recorded to quantify plant biomass and species proportions present on a rake toss. Survey site sampling is repeated monthly from June through October to examine changes in macrophyte communities over seasons.

In addition to monitoring for new invasions of high-priority species like hydrilla and starry stonewort, this work is valuable for helping to better understand aquatic ecology in the Finger Lakes, and the influence of invasive species on aquatic ecosystems. These topics were summarized in a poster prepared for the Northeast Aquatic Plant Management Society's 2026 annual meeting (reference figure) and indicate that AIS flourish in the the same areas that native macrophytes grow, resulting in a strong correlation between native and invasive macrophyte abundance. These results can be used to inform lake managers about the benefit of monitoring prior to AIS intervention to determine the existing level of threat posed by AIS.





Above: AIS (volume, richness), spatial (waterbody), and temporal (year, sampling round) predictors were modelled separately with site as a random effect in LMMs to test effects on native species response variables (richness, diversity) and FQI. AIC values of candidate models were compared to determine the best predictors. The p-values and AIC values are reported within each square for the associated LMM.

Left: Locations of macrophyte survey sites completed in 2025.

GOAL 2: EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

Aquatic Surveys Cont'd

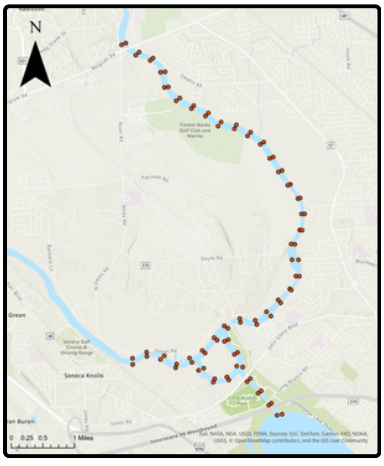
Hydrilla Treatment Monitoring

In 2025 the FLI continued its long-standing commitment to the Cayuga Lake Hydrilla Task Force, supporting vital post-treatment monitoring at Long Point and Aurora. Organized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and NYSDEC, these surveys are a cornerstone of the regional strategy to control hydrilla in Cayuga Lake. Participation in these multi-agency efforts allows PRISM staff to diversify their technical field skills while strengthening critical bonds among federal, state, and local stakeholders. By contributing to this unified data collection process, Finger Lakes PRISM helps ensure the continued success of the eradication program, protecting the ecological and economic health of Cayuga Lake and the broader watershed from this aggressive aquatic invader. PRISM staff supported two full days of point-intercept surveys monitoring hydrilla treatment sites in 2025.

Fanwort Surveys in Seneca River

In August a collaborative team including FL-PRISM staff, NYSDEC Region 7, and the Onondaga County SWCD conducted a high-intensity survey along a seven-mile stretch of the Seneca River in Onondaga County. As a Tier 2 species within the PRISM, fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) is prioritized for eradication due to its low regional abundance and potential for rapid spread. Utilizing motorized boats and systematic rake tosses at 88 points between the Onondaga Lake outlet and the Timber Banks Golf Club, the team aimed to determine the extent of current infestations to inform future management.

While the river-channel survey yielded no fanwort, follow-up investigations of anecdotal reports were critical. Staff confirmed moderate fanwort infestations at two marinas near Onondaga Lake: The Winds of Cold Spring Harbor and J&S Marine. These findings suggest that while the main river channel remains clear, these protected marinas act as "source" populations. Identifying these specific hotspots allows for more targeted, effective control measures to prevent fanwort from expanding further into the broader Finger Lakes watershed.



AIS Technicians surveyed 88 points along the Seneca Rive to help delineate emerging fanwort populations in the area.

AIS Technician Noah Blocher with a full rake of macrophyte biomass during hydrilla treatment monitoring efforts.

GOAL 2: EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

Early Detection

Systematic monitoring is the frontline of defense against ecological disruption. By surveying diverse ecosystems, the Finger Lakes PRISM can identify "emerging" invasive species—those not yet established in the region—before they become unmanageable. Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) is the most cost-effective and successful strategy for invasive species management; identifying a population in its infancy often makes the difference between a successful eradication and a permanent, costly containment effort. While many reports are funneled through public sightings or partner organizations, our professional staff play a critical role in verifying these novel occurrences. In 2025, Finger Lakes PRISM staff and partners identified several high-priority infestations through visual surveys and rake tosses. These detections, ranging from man-made ponds to critical lake tributaries, trigger immediate assessment protocols. By reporting these through iMapInvasives, we ensure that statewide partners are alerted, allowing for swift management actions that protect the integrity of our regional waterways:

Date	Species	Location	Density
8/4/2025	Mile-a-minute (*Persicaria perfoliate*)	Victor, NY	Moderate
8/19/2025	Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*)	Ovid, NY	Moderate
8/20/2025	Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*)	Baldwinsville, NY	Moderate
8/21/2025	Yellow floating-heart (*Nymphoides peltata*)	Marcellus, NY	Moderate
8/21/2025	Parrotfeather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)	Marcellus, NY	Sparse
8/21/2025	European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*)	Union Springs, NY	Trace
8/21/2025	Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*)	Union Springs, NY	Sparse
9/2/2025	Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*)	Ovid, NY	Moderate
9/30/2025	Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*)	Ovid, NY	Moderate

Key Outputs

- *Aquatic Surveys – 5,994 rake tosses across 4 waterbodies, 15 ponds, over 4,000 acres surveyed*
- *Terrestrial Surveys – 305 acres surveyed, 115.1 miles of trail surveyed*
- *9 new populations of 7 mew species regionally*

OUTCOME: Priority conservation targets are protected from new invasive species infestations.

GOAL 3: PARTNERSHIPS, EDUCATION, INFORMATION

"Build partnerships and networks that leverage effective public education efforts and facilitate the sharing of information"

Partnerships are the foundation of Finger Lakes PRISM. Partners and communication networks are vital to effective education, outreach, and advancement in the prevention and management of invasive species.

Federal, State, and Regional Participation

Meetings, Conferences, Statewide Coordination

In 2025, the Finger Lakes PRISM participated in federal, state, and regional meetings and work groups. These meetings addressed issues including hydrilla management in Cayuga Lake and statewide, HWA containment, the Great Lakes Action Agenda, and SLF in New York. PRISM presented at regional conferences held by institutions including the North American Invasive Species Management Association and the North American Lake Management Society. Finger Lakes PRISM staff regularly attend, collaborate, and provide updates during statewide invasive species calls for education and outreach, aquatic- and terrestrial-focused programming, and more.

Lake Associations

Lake associations are a valuable partnership for the Finger Lakes PRISM. They bring diverse motivated volunteers to various PRISM programs and are helpful in identifying invasive species priorities for an important demographic here in the Finger Lakes region. In addition to participation in individual lake association involvement, PRISM staff regularly attend and provide updates to the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance, an organization representing constituents from all 11 Finger Lakes. PRISM staff regularly attend Skaneateles Lake Ecology Team monthly meetings to provide updates, advice, and to coordinate general invasive species efforts in the watershed. Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association and Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association both contribute funds to support watercraft stewards on their lakes.

Our partnership with the Keuka Lake Association (KLA) was particularly critical in 2025 following the discovery of round goby (*Neogobius melanostomus*) by a local angler. PRISM staff helped facilitate the flow of information between NYSDEC Fisheries and KLA members to ensure a coordinated response. This effort complemented our broader 2025 support to help KLA renew its focus on submerged macrophyte monitoring and management. By leveraging the local expertise and passion of these associations, we ensure that our invasive species strategies are both scientifically sound and deeply rooted in the communities they protect.

GOAL 3: PARTNERSHIPS, EDUCATION, INFORMATION

Citizen Science

PRISM volunteers contribute to many aspects of the work of the Finger Lakes PRISM. By facilitating opportunities to participate in invasive species management broadly, motivated volunteers assist in PRISM efforts leading to valuable relationships that expand our detection network across the Finger Lakes. Volunteers are trained in ecology, identification, sampling, and reporting methods for AIS and TIS through various citizen science programs. These trainings enrich volunteers by building community and encouraging stewardship of natural resources while providing important distribution data for invasive species managers regionally and statewide.

Macrophyte Survey Program

The Macrophyte Survey Program (MSP) trains community scientists to sample for invasive macrophytes in waterbodies regionally. Participants report findings using a phone or tablet biweekly. While volunteers are encouraged to examine and report everything they find while sampling, we focus on three high-priority invasive species for the region: hydrilla (Hydrilla verticillata), starry stonewort (Nitellopsis obtusa), and water chestnut (Trapa natans). Updates in staffing and structure for this program resulted in fewer participants and observations in 2025. Despite minimal engagement from PRISM staff, volunteers still recorded 38 rake tosses across 10 different waterbodies. This program will be fully revamped in 2026.

Trail Survey Program

Between August 20th and October 31st, 2025, a dedicated team of 14 community science volunteers executed an intensive terrestrial monitoring campaign. Despite a late seasonal start due to staffing changes, this group demonstrated remarkable efficiency, submitting a total of 257 survey points across the region. The geographical reach of this effort was extensive, covering 12 counties. Of the data points collected, 119 included confirmed detections of high-priority invasive species, providing Finger Lakes PRISM with high-resolution data on the following threats:

- Beech Leaf disease (*Litylenchus crenatus mccannii*)
- Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*)
- Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)
- Slender false brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*)
- ·Swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum spp.*)
- ·Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)

These volunteer contributions are invaluable for filling data gaps in rural or less-frequented areas. By documenting these infestations, our community scientists have provided the foundational data necessary for prioritizing future management and treatment interventions across the landscape.

GOAL 3: PARTNERSHIPS, EDUCATION, INFORMATION

Citizen Science Cont'd

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey Program

The HWA Citizen Science program serves as a critical bridge between public engagement and professional management. Given the overwhelming abundance of Eastern hemlock across our region's gorges and lake bluffs, staff alone cannot monitor every stand. This volunteer-driven effort provides the surveillance data necessary to support and prioritize our larger treatment programs. In 2025, 23 dedicated volunteers contributed 86 survey points across the region. Their efforts confirmed HWA presence at 26 locations, providing real-time data that allows our management teams to respond quickly to new infestations. By empowering residents to monitor their local landscapes, we extend our reach and ensure the long-term resilience of our regional forests.

Hydrilla in Cayuga Lake

Hydrilla in Cayuga Lake has been an ongoing issue since it was first detected in 2011. Over time, as the in-lake distribution of hydrilla changed, the collaborative efforts among local and statewide stakeholders have grown and adapted. PRISM staff participate in monthly task force meetings focused on hydrilla in Cayuga Lake where we interact with local, municipal, state, and federal agencies to contribute to addressing hydrilla. PRISM staff also participate in events hosted annually by partner organizations focused on educating the public about hydrilla and how it is being addressed in Cayuga Lake.

Watershed Management

Based at the FLI, the Seneca Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (SWIO) and Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) represent municipalities in the Seneca, Keuka, and Cayuga Lake watersheds. With a focus on water quality improvement projects to limit nutrients in the lakes, SWIO and CWIO maintain valuable relationships with diverse stakeholders including elected officials and county agency professionals throughout the watersheds. Both IOs provide conduits for invasive species outreach and education to their respective stakeholder groups. The connections between IOs and PRISM also offer opportunities for leveraging resources and expertise for specific projects that have local support and impacts for municipalities.

Key Outputs

- *Finger Lakes PRISM staff participated in over 76 regional, state, and federal meetings with over 2,885 people in attendance.*
- *Community Science Programs – 65 active volunteers submitted 565 survey points and detected 291 invasive species*

OUTCOME: Finger Lakes PRISM is the regional leader in invasive species management facilitating active partners, effective public education, and information networks.

GOAL 4: CONTROL AND RESTORATION

"Control invasions through eradication, containment, suppression, and restoration targeting high priority conservation areas."

While prevention is the most effective and most utilized method of IS control for the Finger Lakes PRISM, active control measures are utilized when practicable. Followed by restoration, active control can mitigate invasive species impacts and spread regionally. Targeting high-priority conservation areas and species is key. Below are details of our control projects in the region.

Aquatic Invasive Species Control

Water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) infestations remain a priority in the Finger Lakes region, particularly in the NYS Canal System, Seneca River, and lake inlets. Addressing all considerable water chestnut populations in the region is not currently feasible.

In 2025, PRISM staff members have monitored European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), which has a moderate abundance regionally with a risk of expanding infestations. The current management goal is containment with a long-term goal of eradication in some areas. PRISM staff also swiftly responded to a population of an emerging species, yellow floating-heart (*Nymphoides peltata*), with the support of local partners.

We rely on our partnerships to guide management projects that can leverage the efforts of volunteers and other institutions. This approach also engages volunteers and professionals in education and outreach about invasive species management to encourage conservation-oriented decisions in the future. PRISM staff supported or hosted several AIS pull events across the region in 2025, and contributed to over 1,600 pounds of invasive plant material removed from more than 40 acres of critical waterways (*see table below*).

Volunteers and AIS Technicians gather to help pull water chestnut near the West River at the south end of Canandaigua Lake.

Volunteers help manage a tangle of yellow floating-heart at a pull event in Onondaga County.

GOAL 4: CONTROL AND RESTORATION

2025 Aquatic Invasive Species Pull Events

Date	Event	Location	Biomass Removed	Acres Treated
6/29/2025	Keuka Outlet Water Chestnut Pull	Penn Yan, NY	250	12
7/10/2025	Oneida Lake Water Chestnut Pull	Canastota, NY	NA (Support only)	
7/12/2025	Montezuma MARSH Water Chestnut Pull	Seneca Falls, NY	NA (Support only)	
7/17/2025	Finger Lakes National Forest	Finger Lakes National Forest	290	18
7/23/2025	Montezuma MARSH Water Chesnut Pull	Seneca Falls, NY	NA (Support only)	
7/24/2025	NYS OPRHP FORCES and WET NETS Program WC Pull	Fair Haven Beach State Park, NY	NA (Support only)	
7/29/2025	Canandaigua Aquatic Invasive Species Pull	Woodville, NY	490	13
8/6/2025	Keuka Outlet Water Chestnut Pull	Penn Yan, NY	90	9
8/6/2025	Finger Lakes National Forest	Finger Lakes National Forest	300	1
8/11/2025	Finger Lakes National Forest	Finger Lakes National Forest	700	0.15
9/17/2025	Yellow floating-heart pull	Sycamore Hill Gardens	1500	0.5

GOAL 4: CONTROL AND RESTORATION

Terrestrial Invasive Species Control

Mile-a-Minute Control

In 2025, Finger Lakes PRISM continued its partnership with SUNY Brockport and NYSDEC to monitor and control mile-a-minute, building on coordinated management efforts that have been ongoing since 2018. Staff participated in six manual removal events, including five at the Oakfield site and one at the Geneseo site. Over the field season, 3,992 plants were removed at Oakfield and 52 plants at Geneseo. Beginning in 2026, Finger Lakes PRISM will coordinate management at the Geneseo site with the goal of eradication and will increase education and outreach efforts in Victor, NY, where a newer population has been identified.

Volunteers pulling mile-a-minute weed in Oakfield, NY

GOAL 4: CONTROL AND RESTORATION

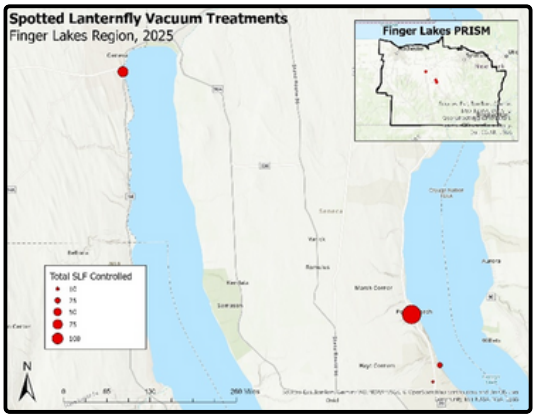
Terrestrial Invasive Species Control Cont'd

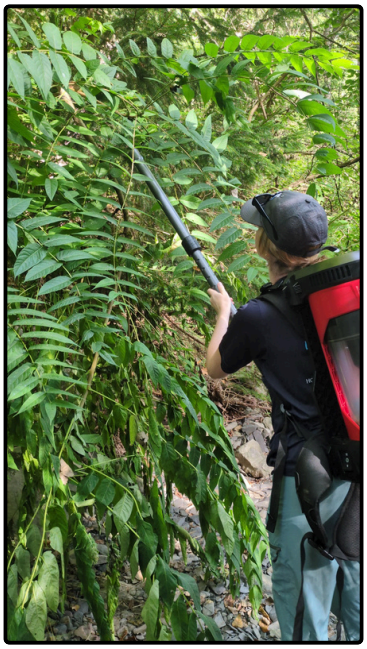
Spotted Lanternfly Control

Direct intervention remains a cornerstone of the regional strategy to slow the spread of the SLF. In 2025, the TIS team successfully controlled 403 SLF using vacuum treatments across five high-priority sites. Community education and engagement also played a vital role in 2025 as demonstrated through a "scraping event" at Hobart and William Smith Colleges where over 20 volunteers removed egg masses from approximately 20 trees. With each mass containing 30–50 eggs, this single effort prevented the hatching of an estimated 1,500 to 2,500 individual lanternflies.

While these targeted efforts are crucial, the bulk of large-scale management in the region is spearheaded by individual vineyards, local farmers, and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. FL-PRISM continues to work alongside these stakeholders, providing technical support and data to complement their intensive treatment programs. This collaborative approach ensures that while the state focuses on broad containment, local teams and volunteers can address emerging hotspots and reduce local population density.

Locations for spotted lanternfly control with vacuums





TIS Techniacian Lindsey Balman using a backpack vacuum to remove and destroy spotted lanternfly

Key Outputs

- *Water chestnut, European frogbit, yellow floating-heart control - over 10,800 pounds removed on 53.6 acres*
- *8.6 acres treated for spotted lanternfly*
- *41 acres of mile-a-minute controlled*

OUTCOME: The occurrence and impact of highly invasive species are reduced in priority conservation areas.

GOAL 5: FUNDING AND SUPPORT

"Secure funding and legislative support from federal, state, and local governments."

Management of invasive species is complex and expensive. A major challenge for Finger Lakes PRISM is to secure the funding and support necessary to accomplish our mission. Strategies to garner funding and support must be targeted, dynamic, and consistent. The Finger Lakes PRISM continually seeks ways to increase external funding and provide support to partner projects. Below are summaries of projects procured from federal and other state funding sources.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Treatment in Finger Lakes State Parks

United States Forest Service - Forest Restoration Program

Partnering with NYS Office of Parks, Restoration, and Historic Preservation (NYS OPRHP), this project will preserve critical riparian habitat in four Finger Lakes-region state parks. Supported by the United States Forest Service (USFS) Forest Restoration Program, this initiative is a vital partnership between the Finger Lakes PRISM and NYS OPRHP. The program focuses on protecting critical riparian habitats within four state parks where Eastern hemlock (Tsuga canadensis) serves as a keystone species. By maintaining these stands, we safeguard water quality, mitigate erosion, and preserve the cooling shade essential for native trout and forest flora.

In 2025, the program successfully treated 855 hemlock trees, totaling 13,625 diameter-at-breast-height (DBH) inches. This effort balanced the expansion of our protection zone with the maintenance of existing stands, consisting of 447 new treatments and 408 re-treatments. Notably, over 5,000 DBH inches of this work required high-angle rope access to reach trees in challenging gorge terrain.

HWA treatment contractors meet with staff from Finger Lakes PRISM and NYS OPRHP on site to discuss treatment methods, locations.

GOAL 5: FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Giant Hogweed Control in the Great Lakes

Natural Resources Conservation Service

This initiative expands statewide efforts to manage giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), a noxious invasive plant posing significant public health and ecological risks. Through a strategic partnership with the NYSDEC and NRCS, the FLI has shifted from providing field support to building full internal capacity for treatment operations. Following a performance extension, FLI is now positioned to implement direct treatments in 2026 and 2027, ensuring long-term control across the Great Lakes basin.

In 2025, staff hosted 35 events, engaging over 1,600 individuals through workshops, presentations, and trainings. While these events covered various invasive species, giant hogweed identification remained a core priority. By embedding a dedicated educator into the program in late 2025, FLI is strengthening regional awareness. Looking ahead, FLI is preparing for giant hogweed control work through securing permits, documenting safety protocols and planning for field work. This groundwork ensures that the upcoming field seasons are supported by both technical expertise and a vigilant, informed public, ultimately protecting the watershed from this hazardous invader.

Managing Invasive Species on Private Lands Critical to Finger Lakes

United States Forest Service – Cooperative Weed Management Area

This project, a partnership among the FLI, NYS OPRHP, and NYSDEC, focuses on controlling Japanese knotweed and water chestnut at Fair Haven Beach, Robert H. Treman, and Stony Brook State Parks. In 2025, the program worked through complex permitting and jurisdictional determinations due to new NYSDEC wetland regulations effective January 1, 2025.

In 2025, FLI prioritized submitting Jurisdictional Determination requests for 161 parcels across four counties. This phase also involves securing written permissions from private landowners adjacent to state lands. Field treatments are now scheduled for 2026 and 2027. This proactive planning ensures that all hand-pulling and chemical treatments in sensitive riparian areas meet strict environmental standards, ultimately protecting the ecological integrity of the Finger Lakes region's most iconic state parks and their surrounding watersheds.

GOAL 5: FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Surveying Ponds in the Finger Lakes National Forest for Invasive Species

United States Forest Service – Cooperative Weed Management Area Program

Finger Lakes PRISM staff continued work on a project to survey 87 manmade ponds within the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF). These ponds provide grazing cattle with drinking water, recreational resources for FLNF visitors, and important water storage for the Seneca and Cayuga Lake watersheds. The program seeks to better understand water chestnut infestations in FLNF ponds and to control four existing populations. Work also focused on inventorying ponds within the forest for invasive species and collecting water quality data at a subset of ponds. Finally, the program includes the development of a community science program to continue pond monitoring into the future.

In 2025, the FLI conducted follow-up surveys on 15 ponds within the FLNF to track and manage invasive water chestnut (*Trapa natans*). Monitoring efforts revealed a successful 75% decrease in plant density compared to 2024. In four ponds where water chestnut was previously recorded but not detected in 2025, rake toss surveys confirmed a healthy resurgence of native species, particularly coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). To maintain these gains, PRISM staff and watercraft stewards manually harvested approximately 1,300 pounds of water chestnut biomass from six ponds using kayaks and jet sleds. This intensive management is critical for the FLNF, as these ponds serve as vital habitats for local wildlife and popular recreation spots for the public.

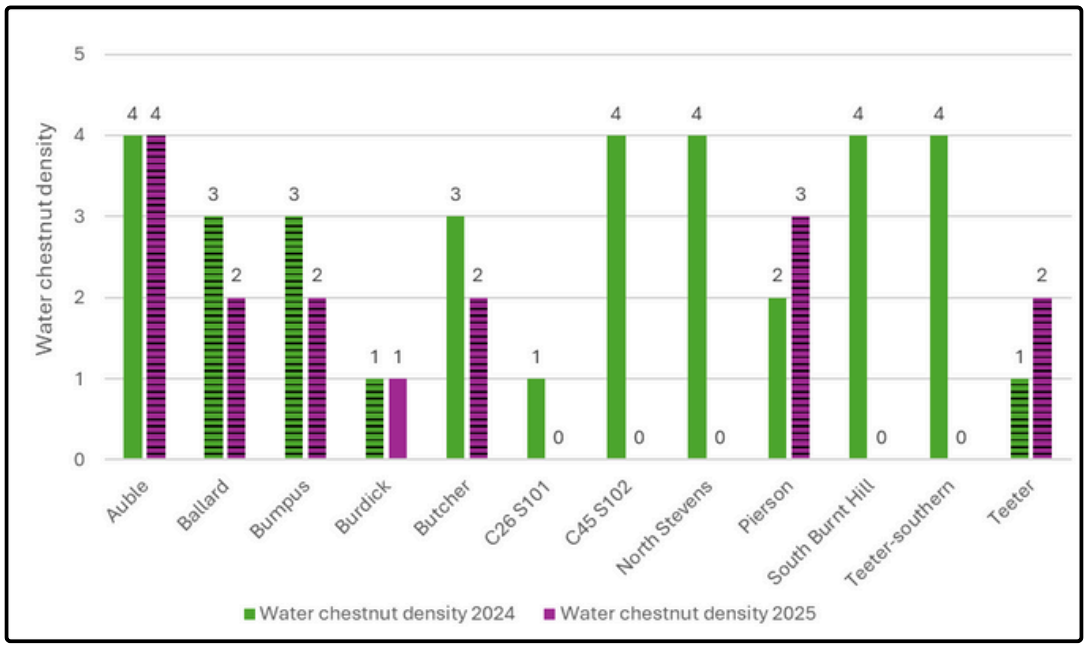
AIS Technicians and watercraft stewards join forces to pull water chestnut in a Finger Lakes National Forest pond.

GOAL 5: FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Surveying Ponds in the Finger Lakes National Forest for Invasive Species Cont'd

United States Forest Service – Cooperative Weed Management Area Program

On a regional scale, controlling water chestnut within the National Forest is critical to reducing the seedbank and limiting the further spread to surrounding areas. By eradicating these upstream populations, we prevent seeds from spreading into the broader Finger Lakes watershed, where they can form dense mats that degrade water quality, impede boating, and outcompete native biodiversity. This work ensures the long-term ecological resilience and recreational value of New York's only National Forest and the surrounding region.



Water chestnut density (scale of 1-4) from 2024-2025 across 12 ponds in the FLNF. Green bars represent 2024, purple bars represent 2025, and treated ponds are represented by stripes. Ballard, Bumpus, Burdick, and Teeter were the only ponds treated in 2024. Water chestnut density was measured based on a scale from 0-4 (0 = absent, 1 = trace, 2 = sparse, 3 = medium, 4 = dense).

OUTCOME: Adequate funding and consistent support ensures effective invasive species management across the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (Finger Lakes PRISM) is a collaborative program designed to address the threat of invasive species. Housed within Hobart and William Smith Colleges' Finger Lakes Institute (FLI), the program is one of eight across New York that focuses on managing invasive species, developing detection programs, employing response efforts, providing education programs and outreach, and working with communities. PRISM programs are administered through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges is a nationally recognized liberal arts institution defined by a longstanding focus on educating across academic disciplines and an intellectual environment that cultivates faculty and student connections. With a strong commitment to inclusive excellence, the Colleges have a distinguished history of interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship, curricular innovation and exceptional outcomes. Hobart and William Smith provide robust programs in career development, study abroad, service, leadership and athletics. Located in the heart of the Finger Lakes region, Hobart and William Smith enjoy a lakeside campus on the shore of Seneca Lake. Originally founded as two separate colleges (Hobart for men in 1822 and William Smith for women in 1908), Hobart and William Smith students share the same campus, faculty, administration and curriculum.

Finger Lakes PRISM would also like to acknowledge Bill Brown, Amy Slentz, and Camille Caceci.

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