

## **The Lake Tahoe Region Aquatic Invasive Species Program**

**By Michelle Sweeney\***

“Can’t beat this. There is nothing like Tahoe on a summer morning,” Melanie Garcia smiles as she gathers with a crew of runners on the beach at D.L. Bliss State Park. They’ve just finished a run on one of the most beautiful waterfront trails Tahoe has to offer. Contemplating a swim, Melanie looks down at the water below her feet. The water is crystal clear, but there are some green leafy plant strands floating in it. “What is this stuff?” One of the runners responds that it is a weed and it does not belong at Tahoe. “Should we be worried about it?” she asks. “I don’t remember seeing it here until last summer, and now this summer...”

Melanie is not the only one asking these questions. What she saw was a plant called Curlyleaf Pondweed. It is one of Tahoe’s “aquatic invasive species,” or non-native plants and animals with the ability to spread aggressively outside of their natural environment. Curlyleaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, and Asian clams are among the most-problematic aquatic invasive species currently in Lake Tahoe. Each aquatic invasive species brings with it undesirable effects. So people are right to be asking questions and inquiring about what is being done, and what they can do to address the issue.

### **What is being done about aquatic invasive species?**

Lake Tahoe local, state and federal government partners are working together with private partners and scientists to come up with solutions. These partners are working in concert through The Lake Tahoe Region Aquatic Invasive Species Program which has three goals: 1) prevention, 2) early detection and rapid response and 3) control and eradication.

There are teams of people working in the prevention effort which aims to both prevent new aquatic species introductions and to prevent the spread of populations already existing in Tahoe area water bodies. Boaters see prevention team members at the boat inspection stations around the lake. Meanwhile, a small team is building the early detection and rapid response effort, which aims to detect new introductions of aquatic invasive species and to respond to these as early as possible. Finally, a growing team of scientists, project managers and divers are at work on control and eradication efforts with the aim to limit and/or stop the spread of aquatic invasive species populations already in the lake. This work continues at Emerald Bay, Marla Bay and several locations around Lake Tahoe.

### **What can you do to help address aquatic invasive species?**

First and foremost, make sure that you and your friends are not introducing an invasive species. Verify that your boat or recreational equipment is clean, dry and free of plant or animal matter before entering any water body. Never dump aquarium water into area lakes, rivers or the stormwater system (roadside ditches or drains). Beyond taking these precautionary measures, should you be interested

in supporting the Tahoe Region Aquatic Invasive Species Program or knowing more about it, please see the Tahoe Resource Conservation District web site at [www.tahoercd.org](http://www.tahoercd.org) and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency web site at [www.trpa.org](http://www.trpa.org). Search “aquatic invasive species” on either site for information.

Aquatic invasive species are a relatively new issue in the Lake Tahoe Region and to many water bodies in the western United States. The prevention program at Lake Tahoe is lauded by many as a “model” for the region. The diligence with which the science and management teams are approaching control and eradication efforts is producing positive results. Now the emphasis is on scaling up these results to address the scope and scale of the problems.

Uncertainties about aquatic invasive species and how to control them remain. Questions about the potential impacts of aquatic invasive species on the ecological, economic and social fabric of the Lake Tahoe Region need answers. Local, regional and federal agencies and political representatives are working as a team to support The Lake Tahoe Region Aquatic Invasive Species Program, to answer questions and to get work done. Though the aquatic invasive species issues are significant, the opportunity and potential for addressing these issues is great, and building.

For more information, contact Julie Regan at [jregan@trpa.org](mailto:jregan@trpa.org); [www.trpa.org](http://www.trpa.org).

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