



## Aquatic Invasive Species Program: Prevention, Early Detection, and Control of the Aquatic Invasive Species in the Cobbosseecontee Watershed

**Variable Leaf Milfoil (VLM)** is an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) not native to Maine that has the potential to outcompete native water vegetation when exposed to our local lakes and ponds. Introduced by means such as boats, trailers, and fishing equipment, this plant can reproduce quickly, alter the freshwater ecosystem, and have drastic effects on wildlife, recreation, and property values. **Infestations:** Six bodies of water within the Cobbossee Watershed: Pleasant Pond, Cobbossee Stream, Horseshoe Pond, Purgatory Stream, Annabessacook Lake, and Jug Stream/Cobbossee Lake.

**Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM)** is similar to variable leaf watermilfoil but more threatening as it can reproduce and spread even faster. **Found in 2018:** This plant was found for the first time in the Cobbossee Watershed at the northern end of Cobbossee Lake (East Winthrop). In 2024, this plant was discovered at the southern end of Cobbossee Lake, but was no longer detected in Cobbossee Stream, where it was found in 2023.

**European Frog-bit (EFB)** is a non-native floating-leaf plant that can also grow out of control. **Found in 2018:** This plant was initially found in Cobbossee Lake in the northern end stream that exits the golf course. Additional infestations have been found throughout the lake, as well as downstream in Cobbossee Stream. In 2025, a new infestation was found on Annabessacook Lake in the SUR off Waugan Road.

**Swollen Bladderwort (SB)** is a non-native, free-floating, submerged plant that can become dominant in ponds and coves and displace native aquatic plants. Swollen bladderwort also reproduces quickly and has a high risk of spreading. **Found in 2024:** This plant was initially found on both sides of the Pleasant Pond boat launch on Thorofare Road, but more infestations have been found in Upper Pleasant Pond.

**Water Chestnut (WC)** is a non-native rooted plant with both floating and submerged leaves. Each floating rosette of leaves can generate up to 20 fruits. This plant has a high risk of spread as rosettes may become detached and float to new areas of a waterbody, causing new infestations. Fruits can remain viable for up to 12 years, and one fruit can produce 15 to 20 new rosettes. **Found in 2025:** Three Water Chestnut plants and five fruits were found in Cobbossee Lake (Jug Stream). All plants and fruits found were removed, but the site will need to be closely monitored in 2026 and beyond. This is the first known infestation of this plant in the STATE OF MAINE.

### What Can We Do About These Invasive Plants?

**1. Prevention - Courtesy Boat Inspections** – Trained inspectors check boats, trailers, and related equipment going into and out of the lake for any debris or plant fragments; all plants found are submitted for identification. **Our inspectors are routinely responsible for over 15% of boat inspections statewide!**

**2. Early Detection - Plant Surveys** – Specially trained staff members and volunteers identify and document locations and levels of invasive plant infestations in our waters. This data is then used to create a



Variable leaf milfoil



Eurasian watermilfoil



European frog-bit



Swollen bladderwort



Water chestnut

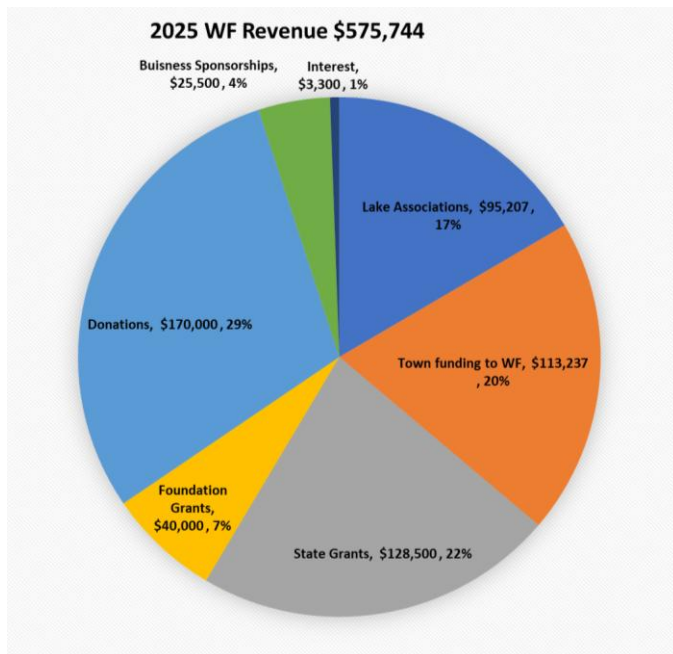
comprehensive map showing the location and level of infestation of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) so that we can determine the best management practices for maximum impact.

**3. Management - Plant Control** – Managing existing infestations of AIS (via hand removal, suction harvesting, and benthic barriers), to aid in recreation and tourism, wildlife habitat, and protection of shorefront property values.

### What will 2026 funding go toward? How will Winthrop benefit?

- Courtesy Boat Inspectors will be on duty Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays from Memorial Day Weekend to Labor Day Weekend, with some additional coverage through September. **Inspectors will be on duty 7 days a week at the Monmouth and East Winthrop public boat ramps on Cobbossee Lake, Friday to Sunday on Annabessacook Lake, and every weekend on Wilson Pond and Maranacook Lake!**
- WF will once again contract with a professional invasive plant removal company to **remove invasive Variable Leaf Milfoil from infested waterbodies**. A total of five weeks were contracted in 2025, costing over \$40,000.
- WF will work with the Maine DEP and Cobbosseecontee Lake Association volunteers **to assess and manage a new invasive species, Water Chestnut, found in Jug Stream in 2025**.
- WF will continue to work with volunteers to **remove European Frog-bit from multiple areas throughout Cobbossee Lake and Cobbossee Stream, as well as a new site in Annabessacook Lake**.
- WF will work with the Maine DEP and Lake Associations to **manage Eurasian Watermilfoil and Variable Leaf Milfoil in Cobbossee Lake, and VLM in Annabessacook using an in-house team**.
- Two dedicated staff plant survey teams will once again **survey throughout the watershed in search of invasives**, as well as train 50+ volunteers to identify potential aquatic invasive plants.

### Where does the funding come from?



**Thank you, Winthrop!** We appreciate your support of the Watershed Friends' Aquatic Invasive Species Program. **Reducing the spread of invasive plants is essential to protecting our property values and tourism dollars on our lakes and preserving the health of the Cobbosseecontee Watershed.** In 2026, we look forward to partnering with lake associations, local businesses, state agencies, and you, the taxpayer and resident, to protect our waters from invasive plants.

To learn more about the Watershed Friends, invasive plants, or to find out how you can get involved, please visit [www.watershedfriends.com](http://www.watershedfriends.com) or contact:

**Jennifer Peasnall**, Director of Conservation, [jennifer@watershedfriends.com](mailto:jennifer@watershedfriends.com), (207) 395-5239

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*“Protecting the lakes, ponds, and streams of the Cobbossee Watershed through community engagement, conservation, and education.”*

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