



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**To: Maine Biz**

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**Photos: see attached; more available upon request**

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The **Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program (VLMP)** announces a major lake monitoring initiative for the Moosehead Lake region. This initiative will establish a regional group of trained volunteers to screen Moosehead Lake for the presence of invasive aquatic plants, establish baseline information about the lake's native aquatic plant communities, and monitor the lake's water quality.

This summer, VLMP staff will conduct two training events in the Greenville area for volunteers from the Moosehead community, Maine natural resource agency personnel, student researchers and others. Participants will learn how to recognize and identify 11 invasive aquatic plants that have been listed by law as imminent threats to Maine waters. Volunteers will also be trained to collect valuable baseline information regarding the lake's native aquatic plant communities and to monitor water quality. When the initial training program is complete, teams comprised of trained volunteers and VLMP staff will begin a comprehensive invasive aquatic plant screening survey on Moosehead Lake. The survey will be conducted over a two year timeframe: beginning in August through September of 2008 and continuing during July through September of 2009.

"The 'Moosehead Lake Volunteer Initiative' will help activate, train, support, and coordinate individuals committed to protecting Moosehead Lake from invasive aquatic plants. While many other lakes in Maine have been assessed for aquatic invaders, Moosehead Lake, due to its extensive area, has had only minor assessments conducted to date," says Scott Williams, VLMP Executive Director. "By enlisting the help of trained volunteers, the people of Maine will get valuable baseline information about the lake in a timely manner—prior to any significant increase in development."

The impacts of invasive aquatic plants are well known: habitat disruption, loss of native plant and animal communities, reduced property values, impaired fishing and degraded recreational experiences, and enormous and ongoing control costs. "With over 6000 lakes and thousands of miles of stream habitat in Maine, the task of preventing the spread of invasive aquatic species in Maine waters is one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time," says Roberta Hill, Program Director of the VLMP's Maine Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants. "Preventing spread through actions such as inspecting one's boat, trailer and gear before launching is the critical first line of defense; but it is equally important to have a system in place for detecting invaders that may slip through the cracks as early as possible, before they have an opportunity to cause significant damage or spread to other waterbodies."

Recreational boating is one of the primary vectors for the spread of invasive aquatic plants. As boating activity increases, the possibility that invaders will be inadvertently introduced to Maine waters increases. The particular challenge posed to any given lake is determined by a number of factors

including size of the waterbody, the amount of available plant habitat, the number of access points, the level of boating activity, the presence (or absence of ) an active invasive plant prevention and early detection program, etc.. When one considers how the Moosehead region may be developing in years to come, Moosehead Lake is highly vulnerable on all fronts.

Workshops will also be offered in the Greenville area for those interested in monitoring Moosehead Lake's water quality. Credible water quality data provides resource managers, watershed communities and user groups with information to help track water quality changes over time and is essential for understanding and protecting Maine lakes. While there are currently approximately 500 VLMP volunteers collecting water quality data on about 500 lakes throughout Maine, the water quality monitoring efforts on Moosehead Lake have been limited.

The VLMP is the oldest and one of the largest citizen lake monitoring groups in the United States, and is the largest provider of scientific lake data in Maine. This project is supported by a grant from the The Betterment Fund, and with funds from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and will be conducted in partnership with other statewide organizations. The Maine Congress of Lake Associations, for example, will train area volunteers to help boaters perform simple and effective inspections of their boats and gear prior to launching.

“The VLMP is uniquely poised to lead a project of this kind. The organization has an outstanding track record as Maine's premier organization for training individuals and groups to collect certified lake water quality data and screen waterbodies for invasive aquatic plants,” says George Cross, Greenville area resident and Steering Committee member for the Moosehead Lake Volunteer Monitoring Project.

An informational meeting to introduce the Moosehead Lake initiative will take place in Greenville this spring. Individuals who are interested in learning more about this project are urged to contact the **VLMP at 24 Maple Hill Road, Auburn, ME 04210, (207) 783-7733, or [vlmp@mainevlmp.org](mailto:vlmp@mainevlmp.org)** to sign up for project updates and notices. Once a date and location for the informational meeting and training events have been determined, an announcement will be made.

*The Maine Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants (MCIAP) was established by the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program (VLMP) in 2003 to provide a citizen-based “front-line” in the battle to protect Maine waters from the threat of invasive aquatic plants. Since formation by the VLMP, the MCIAP has swiftly become a leader in the effort to protect Maine waters from the threat of invasive aquatic plants by promoting prevention, early detection and rapid response at the local level and providing training and technical support across Maine. Through it's nationally recognized Invasive Plant Patrol program, MCIAP has now trained over 1600 individuals in Maine to screen waterbodies for the presence of invasive aquatic plants.*