

May 12, 2021

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal,

Connecticut Sea Grant works towards achieving healthy coastal and marine ecosystems and consequent public benefits and recognizes the long-term damage that invasive species can cause if not addressed promptly and effectively.

The sudden and dramatic arrival and spread of *Hydrilla verticillata*, a non-native aquatic invasive plant in the internationally recognized waters of the Connecticut River estuary has alarmed and mobilized multiple federal, state, local and non-profit agencies. From first observations in 2016, this aggressive plant has spread dramatically, threatening listed plant and animal species and exemplary plant communities that contribute to this region's unique ecological significance.

Hydrilla is a federally listed invasive species that is increasingly considered the worst aquatic plant in the country: its ability to reproduce by multiple means, including small fragments of broken stems, makes it a super-spreader. Threats from this plant include impaired water access and navigation impacting commercial and recreational boating, as well as marinas, and diminished habitats for the spectrum of diverse plant and animal species – several of them state-endangered, that rely on the estuary's intact salt, brackish and freshwater wetlands.

The Connecticut River estuary is, among its many designations, a Long Island Sound Study Stewardship Site and is in the process of being included in the designation of a NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

Financial resources are needed to facilitate timely action by partners working across multiple boundaries and effectively address this invasive plant. We strongly support your request for funding to address the issue of *Hydrilla* in the Connecticut River estuary.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the opportunity to lend support to this important proposal.

Sincerely,



Sylvain De Guise  
Director