

# Rangeley region commits to protecting waterways

By Rebecca Kurtz and Shelby Rousseau  
Special to the Irregular

RANGELEY — Last summer, Maine residents received the news some had been dreading for nearly a decade: Eurasian Watermilfoil had invaded a lake that has enormous recreational, real estate and ecological value. Known as the “pit bull” of aquatic plants EWM was found in Salmon Lake. One of the Belgrade region’s most popular lakes, it is heavily used by fishermen and recreational boaters. The cost of treating this infestation, along with the other infestations in Maine, exceeded \$340,000 in 2008. And nearly 80 percent of this was paid by local taxpayers and lake associations.

At the same time, Mainers learned that Didymo, aka “Rock Snot,” has been found smothering a river in neighboring New Hampshire. And this was while Mainers were reeling from news that small mouth bass had invaded the beloved “Pond in the River.” Finally, they learned that property values on Maine’s Lake Arrowhead declined by 10 to 15 percent due to the runaway growth of algae and invasive milfoil in the lake.

Undaunted by these reports, and unwilling to give up without a fight, voters in the Rangeley region have once again committed to protecting its cherished lakes, ponds and rivers. Residents of the town and plantations voted overwhelmingly to help fund the Invasive Species and Water Monitoring program coordinated by Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust. Under this program, six paid staff members and dozens of volunteers monitor the quality of water on 15 local lakes, conduct courtesy boat inspections, and patrol high risk shorelines and launch areas. A widely respected and award-winning program, it is one of the most comprehensive in the state.

By appropriating funds for this program, local residents committed themselves to protecting the local economy, the world class fishery, the local real estate values and way of life that they love and enjoy. And they did so during tough economic times, demonstrating that Prevention is the most cost-effective way to protect the



An unidentified volunteer clears invasive plant life from Lake Arrowhead where shoreline property values have declined by 10 to 12 percent due in large part to invasive plants. (Submitted photo)

## The Ripple Effect of Invasive Plants & Algae Costs that Reach Everyone

- Real Estate values on infested or algae-filled lakes and ponds decrease by 5 to 25 percent while recreational opportunities decline

- One resort community in Florida expects to lose \$11 million in economic activity due to the presence of a Hydrilla infestation. At the same time Florida taxpayers pay over \$20 million per year to treat its infestations, which despite the effort, continue to increase in size

- Taxpayers in Wisconsin paid \$1.5 million in 2007 to treat 1,000 acres of infested waters

- Residents of Saranac Lake in New York spent \$1.5 million over 3 years and the infestations have not been eliminated

- New Zealand estimates its economic losses due to Didymo (Rock Snot) algae blooms will exceed \$240 million a year

- One resident of Wisconsin reported, “Lake Winnebago was awfully green in the summer of 2007. In fact, at its peak, the algae growth was so thick and foul that lake recreation was impossible. If the wind was right (or wrong, depending on your sensibilities) the odor was noticeable several blocks inland.”

lakes and the future of the region.

To operate its program as efficiently as possible, RLHT needs more help from volunteers. At this time it needs two or three data entry volunteers, 20 boat inspector volunteers and 10 shoreline patroller volunteers.

To learn how to inspect boats, contact Rebecca Kurtz at 864-7311, ext. 5 for a schedule of workshop dates. Similarly, contact Kurtz to attend this year’s Plant ID/Shoreline Patrol workshop on Aug. 11 at 1 p.m. All workshops are free and everyone is encouraged to join the fun.

If you would like to do your part to protect the Region’s water bodies and its economy from Invasive Aquatic species and pollution, contact Kurtz at rkurtz@rlht.org or Shelby Rousseau at srousseau@rlht.org or 864-7311.

*Rebecca Kurtz and Shelby Rousseau are Program Coordinators for Invasive Species and Water Monitoring program coordinated by the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust.*

# WRGY FM

## permit granted

RANGELEY — Community radio for the Rangeley Region has recently taken a huge step toward becoming reality. David McMillan, President of TRANET, a local educational non-profit, announced that the FCC has granted a Construction Permit for the establishment of an FM radio station broadcasting from downtown Rangeley and transmitting from a tower on Saddleback Mountain.

This permit is a critical first step in the creation of a local radio station, as the permit mandates the range and strength of the signal and licenses the station to broadcast. “This permit phase was a difficult process,” stated McMillan. “Our proximity to the Canadian border meant we not only had to conform to national restrictions, but also had to get agreements and signal allowances from the Canadian counterparts to the FCC.” In fact the application had to be amended twice to avoid interferences, and the FCC is requiring the radio group to utilize a more sophisticated and more costly directional antenna for broadcasting.

This vision of a community radio station began in 2001, when a group of Rangeley citizens filed a request for permits and licensing for a radio station. Rangeley, surrounded by mountains and miles away from a significant population base, has always been a difficult reach for most mid-range radio stations, so the idea of a small radio station within the confines of the mountain ranges seemed to be a good answer.

The FCC denied this request and the idea lay dormant until early 2007, when another opportunity at filing began. The process has taken almost two years, but McMillan credits much of the eventual success to the determination of the group, as well as invaluable advice and expertise from Ron Hoar, a summer resident of Rangeley.

“Ron is a direct descendant of Luther Hoar his great-great-grandfather, the first white settler to the region. His father’s cousin, Sherman Hoar, built, owned

— Please see **WRGY** on page 25

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