

Watermilfoil Weevil - Vermont Regulatory and Management Issues

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) has worked with the watermilfoil weevil, *Euhrychiopsis lecontei* (hereafter called weevil) since 1989, allocating more than \$800,000 of state and federal funds toward research and control efforts. The weevil is currently found naturally in 35 of the state's 67 Eurasian watermilfoil-infested lakes. Weevil introductions and augmentations have occurred in 10 lakes since 1993, with over 100,000 weevil adults, eggs and larvae being introduced. Three laws in Vermont regulate weevil importation and introduction.

Importation permits are required from both the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife before weevils from out-of-state can be brought into Vermont. To date, imported weevils have been authorized for use in contained facilities only. Primary concerns with weevil importation and subsequent introduction to state waters (any surface water, whether public or private) are: 1) potential introduction of new invasive species through transfer of water and plant material; 2) potential exposure of Vermont weevils to new parasites or pathogens; 3) potential negative effects on the genetic integrity of the Vermont weevil population; and 4) potential introduction of a new genotype of Eurasian watermilfoil.

To introduce weevils into Vermont state waters a biological control permit is needed from the VTDEC's [Aquatic Nuisance Control Permit Program](#) (ANCP). The applicant must demonstrate and the state must find that the proposed weevil stocking poses: 1) an acceptable risk to the non-target environment; 2) a negligible risk to public health; and 3) a benefit to, or no undue adverse effect upon the public good. At this time, without additional information that addresses the concerns mentioned above, the ANCP requires that all weevils released in Vermont must come from genetic stock originating in Vermont.

In the recent past, removal of weevils from Vermont state waters for educational or scientific purposes was illegal without a collection permit from the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife under their non-game wildlife management rule. Beginning in the year 2000, this permit was no longer required. However, commercial collection requires an "[Importation, Possession & Temporary Exhibition, Propagation Commercial Collection and Commercial Sales of Fish & Wildlife](#)" permit.

The VTDEC administers a grant program which provides financial assistance to municipalities to conduct Eurasian watermilfoil control programs. One of the evaluation criteria the grant program uses for prioritizing projects is the "likelihood of success." The VTDEC does not believe there is currently enough data to show that the weevil can be used reliably or predictably, which would result in a low priority being given such projects based on "likelihood of success."