

# 2020 Lake George Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program

A Trailered Boat Inspection Program

## Final Report



**Lake George  
Park Commission**

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## Executive Summary

Seven years into the Commission's mandatory boat inspection program, no new aquatic invasive species have been discovered in Lake George.

This is perhaps the most important statement that can be made regarding this groundbreaking program that was created back in 2014, in response to recent introductions of two new invasive species (Asian clam in 2010 and Spiny waterflea in 2012). While this program is operated and administered by the Park Commission, it exists thanks to a remarkable partnership between State and local partners who fund 100% of the cost of the program, eliminating any cost to the boaters coming to Lake George.

With the advent of COVID-19, year 2020 was anything but normal for our Lake George community. The Commission's boat inspection program began three weeks later than usual this year, as safety protocols needed to be generated and equipment put in place. However, the Commission kept watch over the primary launches until the program could be initiated, and with the COVID public restrictions in place, very little boating activity occurred during the early weeks of May.

The 2020 boat inspection season on Lake George began on May 21<sup>st</sup> and operated through October 31<sup>st</sup>. While the season was shorter, it was still the busiest year the inspection program has seen since it began in 2014. During 2020, the boat inspection staff processed 37,150 boaters through the six regional inspection stations. Of that number, 10,638 received full entrance inspections, 15,049 received inspections while exiting Lake George (to ensure that no invasives from Lake George are exported to other waterbodies), and 11,463 boats arrived at the inspection stations with an inspection seal (mostly boats returning to Lake George after getting an exit seal). In short, it was the busiest boating year on record on Lake George.

In 2020 there were 171 boats that came to the LGPC's boat inspection stations that were contaminated with visible invasive species (primarily Eurasian watermilfoil, Zebra mussels and Water Chestnut), and these boats were cleaned prior to their launch into the lake. Seven of these 171 boats actually had two different invasive species on them during inspection.



Approximately 11.4 percent of boats receiving an inspection did not meet the "clean, drained, and dry" (CDD) standard of the program, and required decontamination prior to launch into Lake George. The boats not meeting the CDD standard are a risk to the lake, as water in bilges and motors can carry invasive species. We are always striving to educate boaters about the importance of bringing clean vessels to Lake George, and the goal is to reduce the number of decontaminations required by having people take steps on their own to ensure they are clean and ready to be launched.

As always, thanks go to Governor Cuomo for his continued support of this lake-saving program. We also thank our local partners who provide the other half of the cost of this program, including the Warren County Board of Supervisors, the Village of Lake George, the Towns of Bolton, Queensbury and Lake George, the Lake George Association, and the Fund for Lake George.

For a full overview of the program's creation, planning and logistics please refer to the Lake George Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan / Environmental Impact Statement on the Commission's website at [lgpc.ny.gov/lake-george-boat-inspections](https://lgpc.ny.gov/lake-george-boat-inspections).

**Table 1: Boat Inspection Program Summary - By the Numbers**

|   | 2014      | 2015      | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      | 2019      | 2020      | Total       |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Total # of LGPC inspection sites                                      | 6         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 7         | 6         | 6         | 6           |
| Total boater contacts (entrance, exit, returning with seal)           | 20,229    | 27,852    | 31,128    | 31,335    | 32,019    | 33,146    | 37,150    | 212,859     |
| Full entrance inspections   | 10,351    | 10,247    | 10,506    | 10,869    | 10,617    | 9,223     | 10,638    | 72,451      |
| Exit inspections  | 5,960     | 9,949     | 12,259    | 12,588    | 13,447    | 13,639    | 15,049    | 82,891      |
| Returning boats with seals  | 3,918     | 7,656     | 8,363     | 7,878     | 7,955     | 10,280    | 11,463    | 57,513      |
| Number of boats decontaminated  | 1,264     | 1,631     | 1,920     | 1,869     | 1,601     | 1,438     | 1,185     | 10,908      |
| Highest total number of boater contacts in one week                   | 1,703     | 1,949     | 2,375     | 2,287     | 2,692     | 2,598     | 2,774     | N / A       |
| Highest # of decons conducted in one week                             | 118       | 148       | 163       | 182       | 148       | 133       | 109       | N / A       |
| Percentage of inspections requiring decontamination                   | 12.0%     | 16.0%     | 18.0%     | 17.3%     | 15.0%     | 15.6%     | 11.1%     | 15.0%       |
| Number of boats with visible plant matter present                     | 232       | 154       | 127       | 244       | 328       | 287       | 315       | 1687        |
| Number of boats with visible invasive species present                 | 165       | 106       | 109       | 110       | 149       | 146       | 171       | 956         |
| Percentage of boats with visible invasive species present             | 1.6%      | 1.0%      | 1.0%      | 1.0%      | 1.4%      | 1.6%      | 1.6%      | 1.3%        |
| Number of distinct waterbodies boaters came from prior to Lake George | 457       | 432       | 477       | 449       | N/A       | 390       | 379       | N / A       |
| Total number of staff at peak season                                  | 55        | 53        | 48        | 48        | 43        | 50        | 50        | N / A       |
| Total number of decontamination units                                 | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9         | 9           |
| Number of registered public and commercial launches on Lake George    | 47        | 47        | 47        | 47        | 47        | 47        | 47        | 47          |
| Total cost of seasonal staff  | \$548,078 | \$482,443 | \$434,858 | \$441,162 | \$422,846 | \$467,907 | \$429,216 | \$3,226,511 |
| Total program cost  | \$668,537 | \$596,486 | \$546,914 | \$555,883 | \$539,587 | \$574,460 | \$550,049 | \$4,031,919 |



## 2020 Program Description

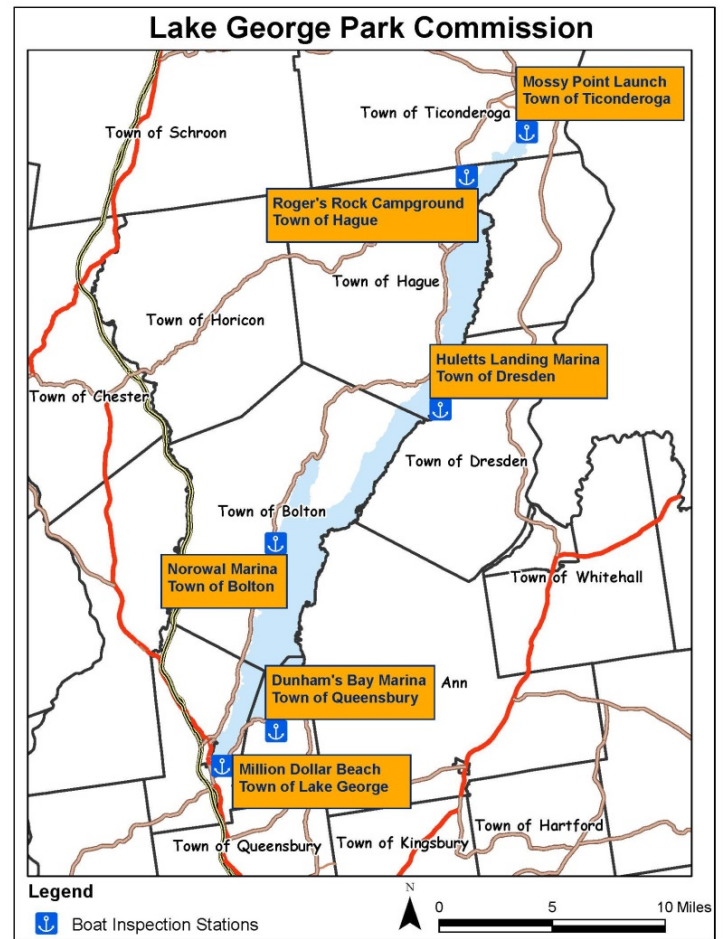
The Lake George boat inspection program is administered from May 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, at six regional inspection stations located around the lake in locations convenient to boaters. Decontamination of boats not meeting the required 'clean, drained, dry' standard is performed by using high pressure, hot water. No chemicals are used in the decontamination process. Inspection data is collected on paper logs and then uploaded electronically for review. Any visible plant or animal materials found during an inspection were collected and sent to the Lake George Association for identification.

This year, the Lake George Park Commission continued its partnership with the NYSDEC, Adirondack Watershed Institute, and other boat inspection programs in the use of the Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Application (WISPA) database, created and managed by the NYS Natural Heritage Program. This application is used to collect the information recorded during the boat inspection process and store it for later processing and reporting. Using this program allowed the LGPC to easily share the data recorded on Lake George with other aquatic invasive species spread prevention program partners. The Commission also benefited by gaining access, at no cost, to a more powerful data collection and processing system than the simpler SNAP Mobile software we previously utilized for this program.

For more details on the inspection, decontamination and boat sealing processes, please refer to the "Lake George Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan and Generic Environmental Impact Statement" on the Commission website. ([lgpc.ny.gov/invasive-species-prevention](http://lgpc.ny.gov/invasive-species-prevention))

## COVID-19 Impacts on Boat Inspection Operations

In April, Commission staff was preparing to start the 2020 season just as COVID-19 was beginning to become a serious public health and safety issue. The Commission began sourcing personal protective equipment (PPE), hand sanitizer, disinfectants, etc. in preparation for the inspection season. At the end of April, the Commission decided to delay the start of the Inspection Program until May 21<sup>st</sup>. This delay gave the Commission additional time to source signage and PPE, review and modify the operations of inspection stations, and develop health and safety protocols for inspection staff to follow. The Commission believed that the relatively low number of boaters visiting Lake George early in the season as well as the need to protect the public and inspection staff justified the minor delay to the start of the season.



In the Town of Hague, the NYS DEC's Rogers Rock Campground facility did not open to the public until July 1<sup>st</sup>. As such, the Commission's boat inspection station in the campground was also closed at that time, and began operations concurrently with the campground opening.

Certain aspects of the 2020 boat inspection program were modified to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure for both the public and inspection staff. Vessel registrations were not sold in person. Boaters were directed to the Commission webstore to purchase their registrations. Vessel sanitary inspections were not performed. Boaters were asked to stay in their vehicles unless instructed differently by inspection staff. Normally, boaters are asked to observe and participate in the inspection process to educate them on what they can do to reduce the risk of AIS spread.

The Commission spent roughly \$6,200 on COVID-19 related purchases. This includes PPE, sanitation equipment, outhouse and hand wash station rentals for all sites that were not for public use, and site signage. See Table 2 for detailed program expense information. Fortunately, there were no COVID-19 infections among the inspection staff. This is likely the result of enforcement of the Commission's health and safety protocols which included mask wearing, social distancing, frequent workplace and equipment sanitization, and reduced interactions with the boating public when possible.

## **Inspection Site Staffing**

All inspection stations were open 7 days a week during the peak boating season. Hours of operation were adjusted in the shoulder seasons (May 21<sup>st</sup> - June 28<sup>th</sup>, September 3<sup>rd</sup> – October 31<sup>st</sup>) based on launch activity from 2014-2019, weather conditions, and local events such as fishing tournaments and regattas. As expected, Fridays through Sundays were the busiest days requiring at least three or more Inspectors on duty at most sites (Figure 5). The Commission continued to staff Mossy Point and the Million Dollar Beach sites in November, until Thanksgiving (the regulatory season ends November 1). These sites were staffed with a single inspector to perform visual inspections of vessels coming through the two DEC launches. Due to freezing temperatures, the decontamination equipment was not available for use. With the warmer weather in November, an increased number of boats launched in the first few weeks of November as compared with prior years.

The 2020 season saw modest wage increases for returning staff. These raises give returning staff an incentive to come back each year as well as help the Commission keep up with statewide minimum wage increases.

## **Staffing Services Provider**

Global Employment Services, Inc. (GES) continued to provide staffing and payroll services under contract this year for the Commission's boat inspection program. This firm is responsible for providing staffing of all Vessel Inspection Technician positions, liability and worker's compensation insurance. Commission staff works directly with GES management on the selection and hiring of program personnel. Operational oversight of all seasonal staff falls under the direction of the Commission's Operations Supervisor III and Trades Generalist. The Commission's contracted staffing provider is selected through an open competitive bidding process at the end of each contract period.

## Launch Management and Controls

There are three types of launches on Lake George: Public (State and Municipal), Commercial (marinas and motels), and Private (Home Owners Associations and individual homeowners). In total there are more than 80 locations on Lake George where a trailered boat can be launched, all of which require oversight and control. The Commission has executed Launch Agreements with each of these facilities to ensure compliance with the regulatory program. Each Launch Agreement requires the recording of all launches and retrievals of vessels, and the securement of the launch during off hours.

## Operations at DEC launches

Historically, Rogers Rock and Mossy Point state-owned launches on Lake George have been open to the public at all times. Million Dollar Beach is administered as a day-use site, and closes at night in the peak boating season. During the off hours when the Commission's inspection facilities were closed, boaters could demonstrate compliance with the regulations by signing into a launch register, removing their VICS and placing it into a secure lock-box provided at the inspection site. When inspection technicians arrived at the launch in the morning, the seals were recovered from the night drop box, and these seals were compared with the number of vessel trailers in the parking lot. Any discrepancies between seals and trailers in the lot were researched to ensure compliance.

Beginning after the Labor Day weekend, 2019, the DEC began closing gates installed at the Mossy Point and Roger's Rock launches in an effort to secure those launches and reduce the risk of AIS introduction by a watercraft launched without having been inspected. The Commission continued this practice in the 2020 season and worked with the DEC to come up with a schedule for Inspection Station operations at those sites to allow for early opening and later closing. This allowed for continued access to the lake while increasing launch security. This increase in hours of operations also increased total staffing costs.

In partnership with the lake protection groups, the Commission staffed the Mossy Point and Million Dollar Beach inspection stations until November 25<sup>th</sup> to provide additional spread prevention coverage. These two sites remain in use by the boating public until winter weather sets in. This extended staffing, beyond the regulated boating season, added \$8,827.25 to the total staffing expenses which was absorbed by existing program funding.

In total, 406 inspections were performed in November. Of those 406 vessels, 89 (21.9%) had inspection seals in place, 92 (22.7%) arrived needing inspection, and 225 (55.4%) were vessels exiting Lake George. See figure 7 for detailed information. This year's total number of inspections in November is higher compared to previous years, though it is difficult to make direct comparisons given weather variations year to year. These higher numbers are likely the result of unseasonably warm weather and a continuation of the increased traffic trend seen all season.

## Management Efficiencies: “Lake George Only” Boats

In preparation for the Lake George AIS regulations it was recognized that a significant portion of the regulated constituency are boats that are stored locally and only used on Lake George. In consideration of this, the Commission organized programs that would allow these boats to forego the inspection process knowing that they were not a threat to bring new AIS to Lake George.

The Commission continued the management of Residential and Home Owner Association (HOA) launches and local marine services professionals through the use of Launch Agreements and Hauler Agreements, respectively. These agreements are updated and Haulers provide new manifests of the vessels under their care, custody and control each season.

When a boat listed within a launch agreement or a hauler manifest travels to another waterbody, it may only be launched into Lake George once it has passed a Commission-sanctioned Cleaned-Drained-Dry inspection and/or decontamination and received a vessel inspection control seal.

### Trout Lake

Trout Lake is a relatively small lake in the Town of Bolton which is navigable by trailered vessels, and it is tributary to Lake George. As such, it has been included in the Commission’s boat inspection program requirements. Trout Lake currently has no known aquatic invasive species. Including Trout Lake in the AIS program serves to protect both waterbodies from potential ecological and economic damage.

There are no public launches on Trout Lake, but there are several private and HOA trailer launches. The Commission has executed Launch Agreements with Trout Lake launch owners as was done with launch owners/operators on Lake George. These Launch Agreements allow vessels owned by the launch owner and listed on the agreement to be launched into Trout Lake. If the vessel was launched anywhere other than Trout Lake, it must be taken to an Inspection Station, inspected, and if necessary, decontaminated prior to its launch into Trout Lake.

## Program Cost, Funding, and Partners

This program exists through generous funding provided through a cost-sharing between the NYS Environmental Protection Fund and through local municipal and nonprofit contributions. Expenses and income are detailed in the tables in this section. To get a better understanding of the program expenses, below are the itemized costs and contributions of the program since 2014.

### Program Expenses

Table 2: Direct costs associated with staffing and program administration:

| Expense Type                           | Amount       | Amount     | Amount | Amount  | Amount   | Amount     | Amount   | Amount       |
|--|--------------|------------|--------|---------|----------|------------|----------|--------------|
| One Time Expenses                      | 2014         | 2015       | 2016   | 2017    | 2018     | 2019       | 2020     | Total        |
| Decontamination units (9, see Table 1) | \$204,000.00 | \$0.00     | \$0.00 | \$0.00  | \$0.00   | \$0.00     | \$0.00   | \$204,000.00 |
| Site Work and                          | \$49,722.41  | \$1,617.00 | \$0.00 | \$55.00 | \$425.00 | \$1,257.00 | \$250.00 | \$53,326.41  |



|   |                     |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Signage   |                     |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
| Safety/Security (fire extinguishers, lock boxes)                          | \$1,648.49          | \$68.10            | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$1,716.59          |
| Radios, Cellphones, tablets, credit card terminals                        | \$7,155.54          | \$2,125.69         | \$573.83           | \$437.76           | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$422.00           | \$10,714.82         |
| Inspection site offices (1 in 2015 at MDB)                                | \$31,627.00         | \$7,700.00         | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$39,327.00         |
| Secure Storage Unit Delivery/Set up                                       | \$1,828.62          | \$350.00           | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$2,178.62          |
| Covers for Landas (2 in 2014, 4 in 2015, 2 in 2019)                       | \$1,500.00          | \$3,000.00         | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$1,860.00         | \$0.00             | \$6,360.00          |
| Cloud Setup for Data Reporting  | \$251.27            | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$251.27            |
| <b>Subtotal</b>   | <b>\$297,733.33</b> | <b>\$14,860.79</b> | <b>\$573.83</b>    | <b>\$492.76</b>    | <b>\$425.00</b>    | <b>\$3,117.00</b>  | <b>\$672.00</b>    | <b>\$317,874.71</b> |
|   |                     |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
| <b>Recurring Expenses</b>   |                     |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
| Wash Unit Maintenance & Misc. Parts                                       | \$6,594.44          | \$1,445.16         | \$3,748.59         | \$2,321.50         | \$3,950.31         | \$408.95           | \$521.00           | \$18,989.95         |
| Training Facility Rental  | \$1,093.48          | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$1,093.48          |
| Seals and Wire  | \$12,212.40         | \$3,094.00         | \$10,494.45        | \$5,663.00         | \$6,625.00         | \$8,346.00         | \$8,856.35         | \$55,291.20         |
| Fuel & Truck Maintenance  | \$4,983.56          | \$3,621.70         | \$3,000.47         | \$2,794.52         | \$2,317.55         | \$2,155.69         | \$1,708.59         | \$20,582.08         |
| Advertising/Rack Cards  | \$2,077.14          | \$1,285.00         | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$1,420.00         | \$4,038.00         | \$1,188.00         | \$10,008.14         |
| Hardware/Supplies   | \$8,028.29          | \$865.51           | \$1,248.76         | \$5,241.47         | \$2,797.81         | \$2,131.95         | \$3,814.43         | \$24,128.22         |
| Hulett's Landa Parking Rental   | \$3,500.00          | \$3,500.00         | \$3,500.00         | \$8,900.00         | \$8,900.00         | \$8,900.00         | \$8,900.00         | \$46,100.00         |
| Uniforms  | \$3,258.99          | \$3,770.90         | \$3,286.40         | \$0.00             | \$1,978.90         | \$1,688.45         | \$4,996.80         | \$18,980.44         |
| <b>Subtotal</b>   | <b>\$41,748.30</b>  | <b>\$17,582.27</b> | <b>\$25,278.67</b> | <b>\$24,920.49</b> | <b>\$27,989.57</b> | <b>\$27,669.04</b> | <b>\$29,985.17</b> | <b>\$195,173.51</b> |
|   |                     |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
| <b>Monthly Expenses</b>   |                     |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                     |
| Utilities (season total: electrical service, outhouses, landlines, water) | \$4,141.96          | \$3,633.24         | \$2,783.94         | \$3,865.23         | \$2,744.73         | \$2,787.50         | \$8,037.30         | \$27,993.90         |
| Secure Storage (Annual total)   | \$3,321.25          | \$3,247.68         | \$3,247.68         | \$3,831.24         | \$3,202.25         | \$3,202.26         | \$4,743.00         | \$24,795.36         |
| Cellular Phones (2014: season total; 2015 & 2016: through Nov.)           | \$5,819.44          | \$1,485.41         | \$2,028.88         | \$941.00           | \$1,073.59         | \$1,679.52         | \$1,958.04         | \$14,985.88         |
| Cloud Services  | \$269.91            | \$269.91           | \$269.91           | \$269.91           | \$269.91           | \$0.00             | \$0.00             | \$1,349.55          |

|  |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                       |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| SnapSurvey WebHost Service (annual subscription)   | \$2,553.00          | \$3,350.00          | \$4,500.00          | \$4,124.00          | \$4,124.00          | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$18,651.00           |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                                    | <b>\$16,105.56</b>  | <b>\$11,986.24</b>  | <b>\$12,830.41</b>  | <b>\$13,031.38</b>  | <b>\$11,414.48</b>  | <b>\$7,669.28</b>   | <b>\$14,738.34</b>  | <b>\$87,775.69</b>    |
| <b>Staffing</b>                                    |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                       |
| Seasonal Staff Labor Cost                          | \$548,078.47        | \$482,433.11        | \$434,858.35        | \$441,751.04        | \$422,846.33        | \$467,907.27        | \$423,087.53        | \$3,220,962.10        |
| Background Checks                                  | \$4,865.00          | \$3,050.02          | \$2,904.79          | \$1,342.18          | \$900.18            | \$950.07            | \$600.03            | \$14,612.27           |
| Marina Liability Insurance                         | \$13,383.00         | \$13,800.00         | \$14,658.40         | \$15,500.00         | \$15,500.00         | \$5,266.00          | \$5,529.00          | \$83,636.40           |
| Finance charges                                    | \$501.94            | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$501.94              |
| Full time Trades Generalist w/ Benefits            | \$49,738.05         | \$52,774.00         | \$55,809.95*        | \$58,846.00         | \$60,511.74         | \$61,881.95         | \$75,437.91         | \$414,999.60          |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                                    | <b>\$616,566.46</b> | <b>\$552,057.13</b> | <b>\$508,231.49</b> | <b>\$517,439.22</b> | <b>\$499,758.25</b> | <b>\$536,005.29</b> | <b>\$504,654.47</b> | <b>\$3,734,712.31</b> |
| <i>Summary: Program Annually Recurring Expense</i> | <i>\$674,420</i>    | <i>\$581,625</i>    | <i>\$546,340</i>    | <i>\$555,391</i>    | <i>\$539,162</i>    | <i>\$571,343</i>    | <i>\$549,377</i>    | <i>\$4,017,661</i>    |
| <i>Summary: Program One-Time Up-Front Expense</i>  | <i>\$297,733</i>    | <i>\$14,861</i>     | <i>\$574</i>        | <i>\$492</i>        | <i>\$425</i>        | <i>\$3,117</i>      | <i>\$672</i>        | <i>\$317,874</i>      |
| <b>TOTAL Annual Program Cost</b>                   | <b>\$972,153</b>    | <b>\$596,486</b>    | <b>\$546,914</b>    | <b>\$555,883</b>    | <b>\$539,587</b>    | <b>\$574,460</b>    | <b>\$550,049</b>    | <b>\$4,335,536</b>    |

\* In 2016, Park Ranger salary and benefits were paid for out of the Commission budget, not Inspection Program funding.

### Program Funding

Table 3: Staffing and program administration costs incurred by the Commission were shared by New York State and locally-based municipal and nonprofit entities:

| Source                            | Funding (For 2020 Annual Program Cost) |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| NYS Environmental Protection Fund | 50% of program cost, up to \$350,000   |
| Warren County                     | \$100,000                              |
| Village of Lake George            | \$30,000                               |
| Town of Lake George               | \$30,000                               |
| Town of Bolton                    | \$30,000                               |
| Town of Queensbury                | \$30,000                               |
| Fund for Lake George              | \$30,000                               |
| Lake George Association           | \$30,000                               |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>\$630,000</b>                       |

The Lake George Association administered funds from their New York Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention Program Grant to aid the towns of Putnam and Hague in their efforts to staff the town launches. The Park Commission greatly appreciates the efforts of the Lake George Association, and the Towns of Hague and Putnam for their participation in the control and monitoring of these launches.

## 2020 Inspection Program Results

The Lake George Park Commission boat inspection program had a total of 37,150 boater contacts in 2020 (Figure 1, see Appendices for all figures and tables referenced henceforth). Approximately twenty-nine percent of these (10,638) were boats arriving at Lake George without a Vessel Inspection Control Seal (VICS), requiring a full inspection (Figure 2). Of those 10,638 trailered boats, 1,185 vessels or 11.1% posed a threat of aquatic invasive species transport, and received onsite decontamination (Figures 3a and 3b).

Almost 31 percent of all boater contacts were boats returning to Lake George with a Vessel Inspection Control Seal (Figure 4), meaning they had either already had an entrance inspection from a previous visit or they were returning to Lake George following a previous exit inspection. The exit inspection of trailered boats being retrieved from Lake George represents roughly 41% of all boater contacts. This ‘exit seal’ portion of the program is a tremendous efficiency for the program and for boaters, keeping costs down while ensuring protection of the lake.

During the 2020 season, 315 vessels arrived at inspection stations with visible organisms (plant and/or animal) attached to the vessel or trailer, up 9.75% from last year. A total of 171 of those vessels were confirmed to have one or more aquatic invasive species present, equating to approximately 1.6% of boats arriving at Lake George. (Table 4)

Table 4: Vessels with visible AIS retrieved during entrance inspections since 2014. Note that some vessels have more than one confirmed AIS present.

### Visible invasive species identified during entrance inspections

| Species                | 2014       | 2015       | 2016       | 2017       | 2018       | 2019       | 2020       | Total      |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Eurasian watermilfoil  | 119        | 67         | 69         | 70         | 67         | 71         | 81         | 544        |
| Zebra mussels          | 23         | 20         | 11         | 29         | 48         | 54         | 72         | 257        |
| Curly leaf pondweed    | 13         | 12         | 17         | 5          | 6          | 7          | 8          | 68         |
| Water chestnut         | 8          | 7          | 11         | 12         | 28         | 26         | 13         | 105        |
| Fanwort                | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          | 2          |
| Quagga mussels         | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Hydrilla               | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          | 1          |
| Variable leaf milfoil  | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 5          | 0          | 6          |
| Snail                  | 2          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          |
| Spiny Waterflea        | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| Rusty Crayfish         | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| <b>Total Collected</b> | <b>165</b> | <b>106</b> | <b>108</b> | <b>117</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>163</b> | <b>178</b> | <b>987</b> |

In 2020, boats arriving at Lake George had previously visited 379 unique waterbodies across the United States and Canada. The three most common waterbodies visited prior to coming to Lake George include the Hudson River, Saratoga Lake, and Lake Champlain (Table 6).

As expected, inspection activity is significantly greater during the short “peak” summer season (June 27<sup>th</sup>-September 7<sup>th</sup>) compared to the longer shoulder seasons (May 21<sup>st</sup> -June 26<sup>th</sup>, September 8<sup>th</sup> – October 31<sup>st</sup>). Staffing levels were adjusted in accordance to these trends in activity. Total staff hours for 2020 ranged from 81.25 to 1,202.5 hours per week throughout the season (Figure 6).

## **Program Compliance**

Program compliance checks are conducted primarily by the Commission’s Marine Patrol. The patrol devoted considerable time to the aquatic invasive species programs in 2020.

The patrol spent 534 hours and made 6,141 checks on launches, both public and private, around the lake. During those checks, there was activity present 167 times. Three of those checks resulted in finding vessels that were not registered to launch at certain private launches. Following investigation, one ticket was written under this regulation related to launching without an inspection, and two were given warnings and logged into the LGPC database for future potential violation action.

## **Conclusions**

Year 2020 was a difficult year all the way around with the Covid-19 pandemic, and the LGPC boat inspection program was not immune to these challenges. However, through the hard work of the program’s supervisors and staff, it was seen as a success in stopping more invasive species from entering Lake George than any other year of the program. This season saw 4,004 (10.8%) more total boater contacts / inspections performed than last year, the previous busiest year, all within a condensed season. It was indeed a busy boating summer on Lake George, with total inspection activity peaking at 2,774 boater contacts in a single week (August 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>). The Million Dollar Beach (MDB) site continues to be the busiest inspection station on Lake George with almost 50% of all boater interactions occurring at this one site in 2020, due to its low launch cost, accessibility, and parking availability. With many people forced to change their summer plans due to COVID-19, many turned to outdoor recreation and boating as a way to get out and enjoy the nice weather.

This year, the Lake George Park Commission’s Boat Inspection Program succeeded in preventing one hundred seventy one vessels from entering the lake with invasive species, and potentially many others that arrived to the lake not clean, drained and dry, possibly carrying invasives not easily spotted through visual inspection. This year there were several noteworthy AIS interceptions; two vessels with fanwort, one with quagga mussels, and one with hydrilla. These

aggressive invaders could have caused serious, negative ecological and economic impacts had they been successfully introduced to Lake George.

NYS DEC continued to secure their two northern launches (Mossy Point and Rogers Rock) during off-hours to help prevent uninspected launches. This strengthens the Commission's invasives prevention program and increases protection of the lake. The increase of inspection station hours at the Roger's Rock and Mossy Point launch sites to manage the DEC gates added slightly to this year's staffing costs.

The delay in the start of the 2020 season and even further delay of the Rogers Rock Campground opening led to lower 2020 operating/staffing costs. Once all sites were open and the program was in full swing, staffing costs were slightly higher compared to last year due to modest wage increases for returning staff as well as longer hours of operations at Rogers Rock and Mossy point, as mentioned above. Warmer weather this November allowed the Commission to extend its off season staffing of the Million Dollar Beach and Mossy Point sites through the end of the month, two weeks longer than last year. This negated some of the savings seen at the start of the year, but the program still operated within budget.

The Adirondack Watershed Institute-operated inspection and decontamination station at the Exit 18 northbound rest area on the NY I-87 Northway did not significantly reduce the number of uninspected boats arriving in the Lake George region. This year the Lake George program saw a total of 556 vessels arrive with ADK Clean seals from all the various Adirondack sites. That's roughly 4.9% of sealed vessels arriving at LGPC inspection stations. However, the Commission is optimistic that as time passes more boaters will become familiar with the Adirondack Welcome Center site and take advantage of its easy access and convenience, and expects the number of boats arriving at Lake George with ADK CLEAN seals to increase annually.

This aquatic invasive species prevention / mandatory boat inspection program is only successful because of the incredible support for it. The Commission gives special thanks to Governor Andrew Cuomo, the Warren County Board of Supervisors, the municipalities of Queensbury, Lake George, the Village of LG, Bolton, Hague and Putnam, and certainly our nonprofit lake-based partners including the Lake George Association and the Fund for Lake George. These entities provide the combined funding necessary to allow the Commission to operate this critical program every year. The Commission strives every year to make the program as cost-effective and public-friendly as possible. Lake George still has the relatively enviable position of having only five invasive species in its crystal clear waters, and with public support and community partnerships, we endeavor to keep it that way for generations to come.

## **Additional Acknowledgements**

The Commission would like to recognize the considerable work the Vessel Inspection Technicians did this season under adverse conditions. These dedicated individuals are the backbone of this program and the face of the Lake George Park Commission for many of the visitors to this area. They deserve acknowledgement and a pat on the back (metaphorically of course, due to social distancing requirements).

The Commission would like to thank the Lake George Association for their help identifying the many samples collected by our inspectors. A special thanks to the NYS Natural Heritage Program's *iMap* Invasives team for helping the Lake George Park Commission integrate with the WISPA Survey system that the many other invasive species spread prevention programs throughout New York are using. This system allows the Commission to more actively participate in the New York statewide spread prevention efforts.



## Appendices

Figure 1: Total boater interactions by inspection station in 2020 including boats arriving without VICs, boats arriving with VICs, and exit inspections

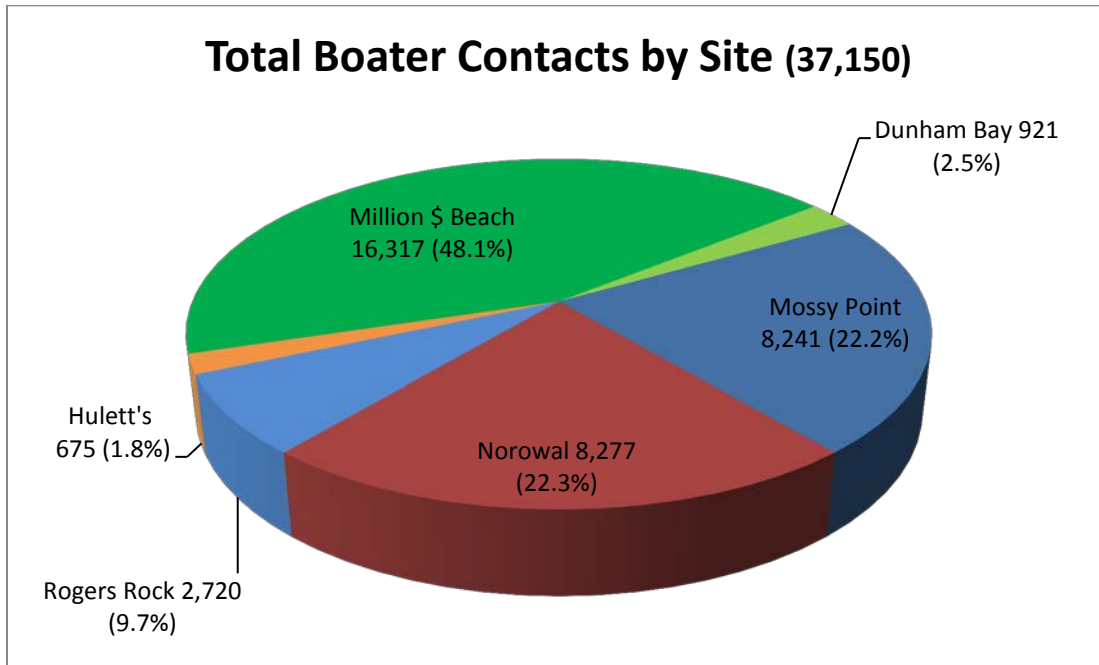


Figure 2: Total number of vessel inspections for boats arriving without VICs

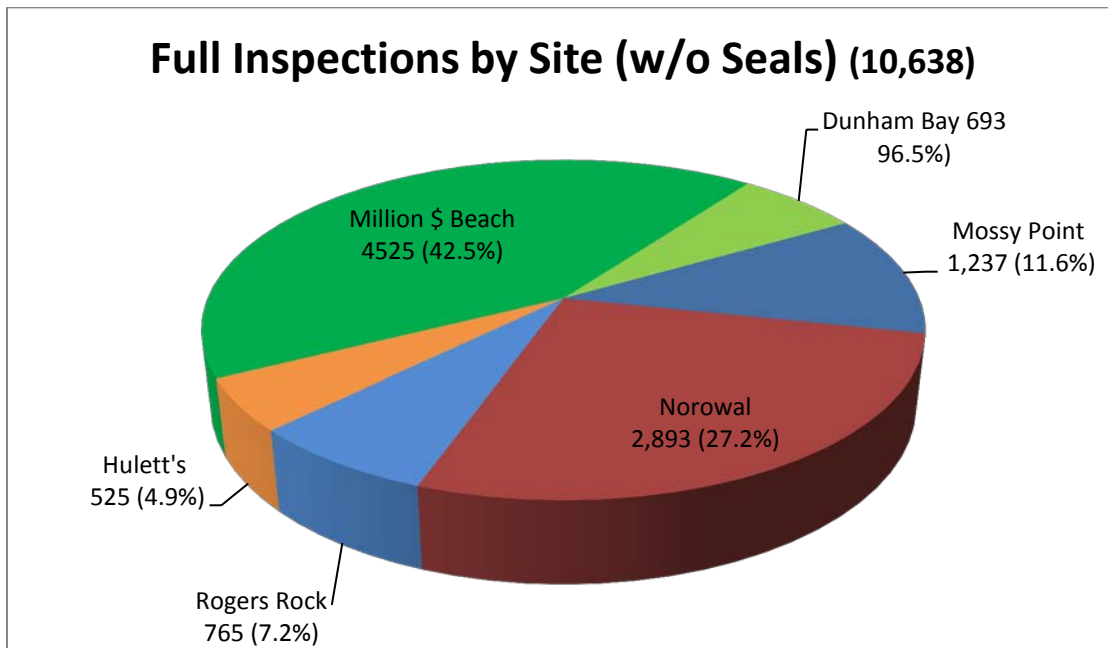


Figure 3a: Total number of vessel decontaminations performed each year.

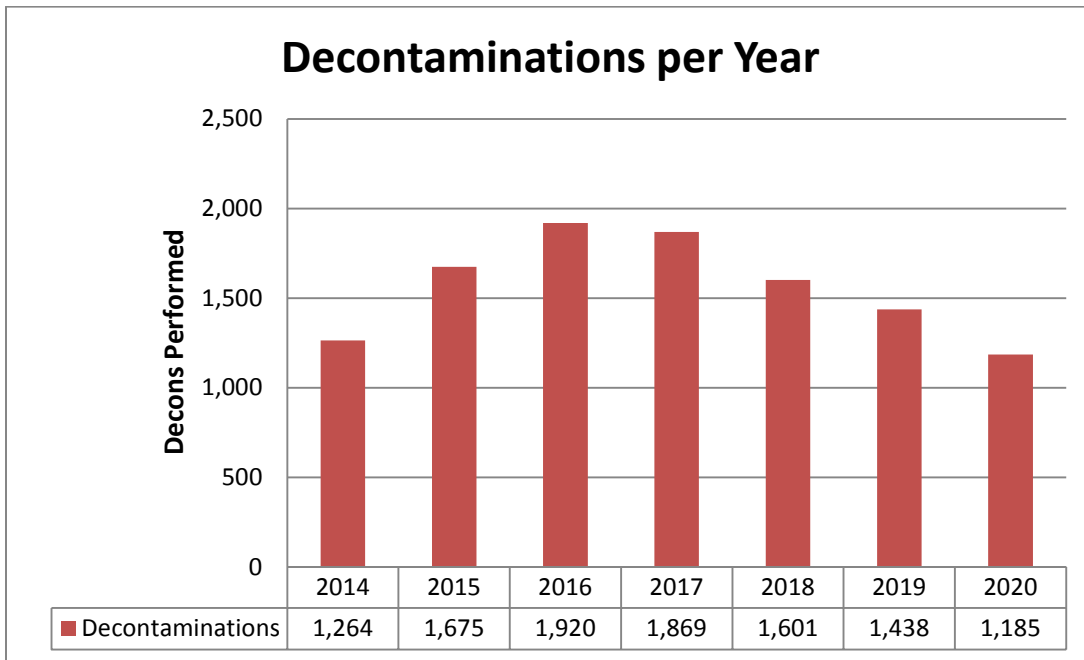


Figure 3b: Decontaminations performed at each site in 2020

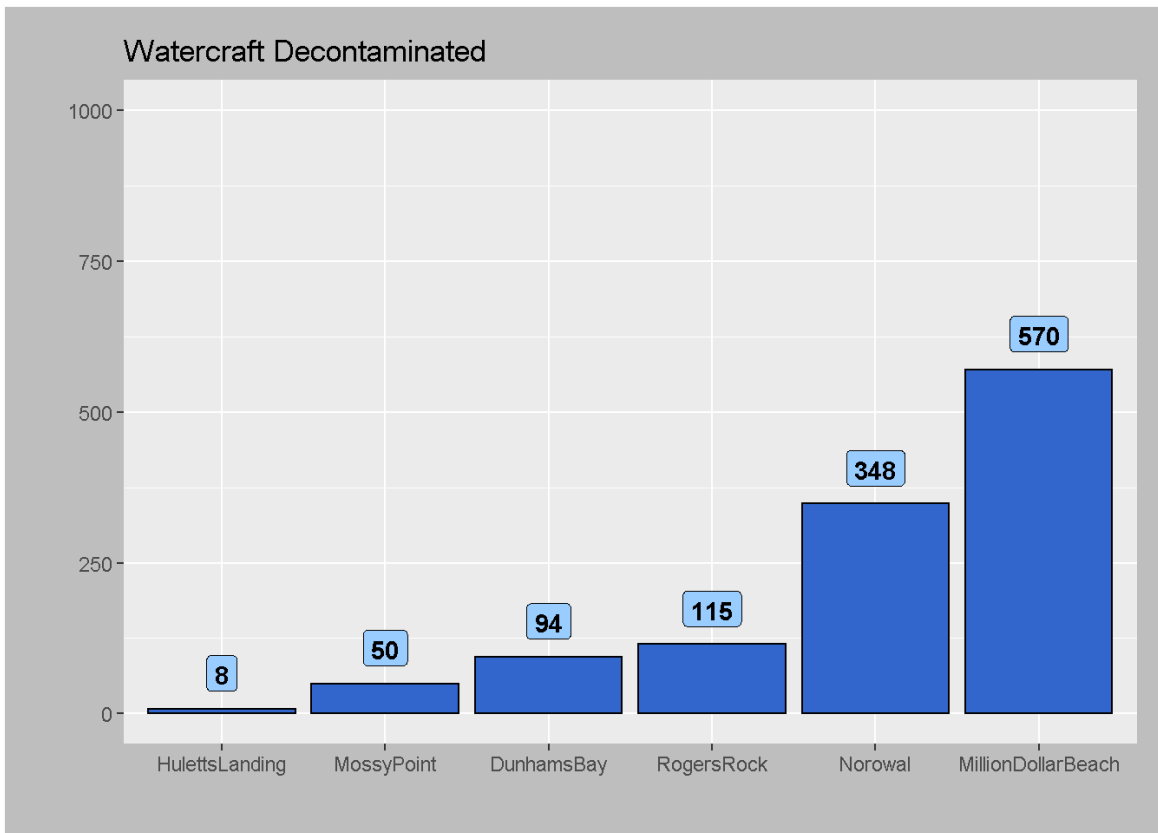


Figure 4: Total number of boats arriving at an inspection/launch site already inspected and sealed.

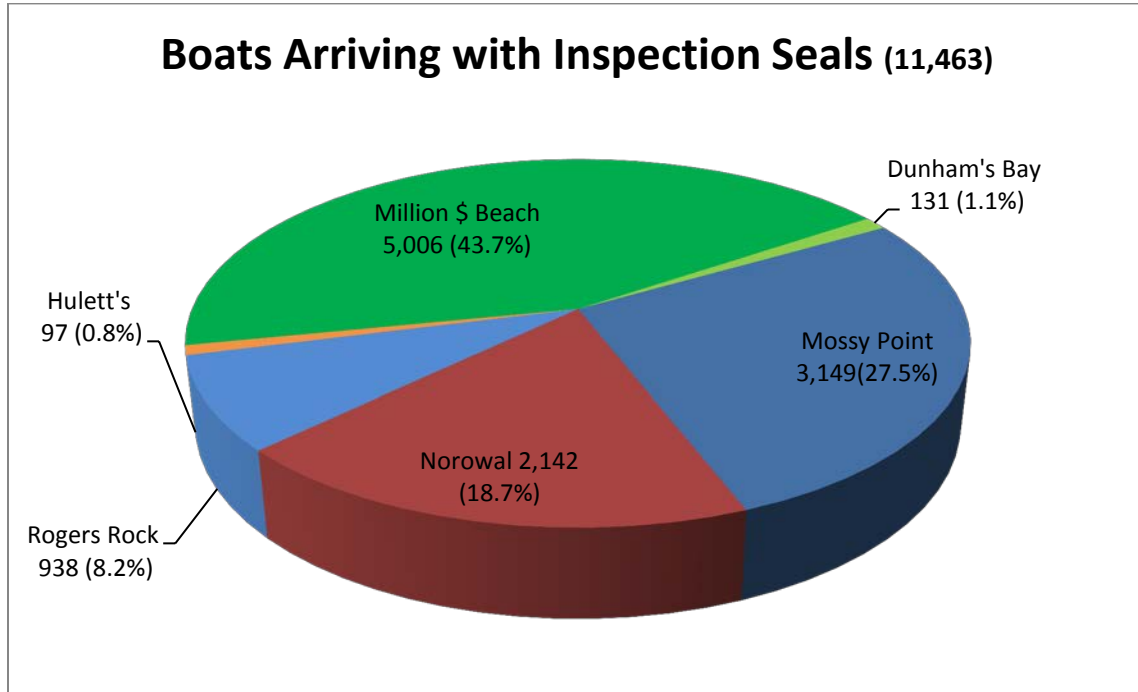


Table 6: Top ten waterbodies visited prior to arriving at Lake George in 2020.

### Top 10 Waterbodies Visited Prior to Arriving at Lake George

| Rank | Water Body           | Number of AIS | Number of Watercraft |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|      |                      |               | 2020                 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 |
| 1    | Hudson River         | 122           | 708                  | 476  | 520  | 542  | 602  | 515  | 379  |
| 2    | Saratoga Lake        | 4             | 493                  | 294  | 429  | 371  | 386  | 375  | 279  |
| 3    | Lake Champlain       | 51            | 323                  | 290  | 284  | 320  | 281  | 251  | 203  |
| 4    | Great Sacandaga Lake | 3             | 308                  | 227  | 242  | 270  | 272  | 263  | 196  |
| 5    | Schroon Lake         | 3             | 257                  | 179  | 196  | 204  | 196  | 204  | 114  |
| 6    | Long Island Sound    | Salt Water    | 220                  | 313  | 320  | 311  | 253  | 246  | 124  |
| 7    | Lake Hopatcong       | 3             | 214                  | 110  | 211  | 222  | 216  | 197  | 185  |
| 8    | Candlewood Lake      | 3             | 157                  | 103  | 139  | 147  | 146  | 141  | 125  |
| 9    | Connecticut River    | 4             | 141                  | 121  | 109  | 129  | 124  | 127  | 91   |
| 10   | Greenwood Lake       | 2             | 141                  | 115  | 133  | 167  | 157  | 127  | 122  |

Figure 5: Shows peak season Inspection activity by day for all inspection stations combined. Peaks coincide with weekends and holidays.

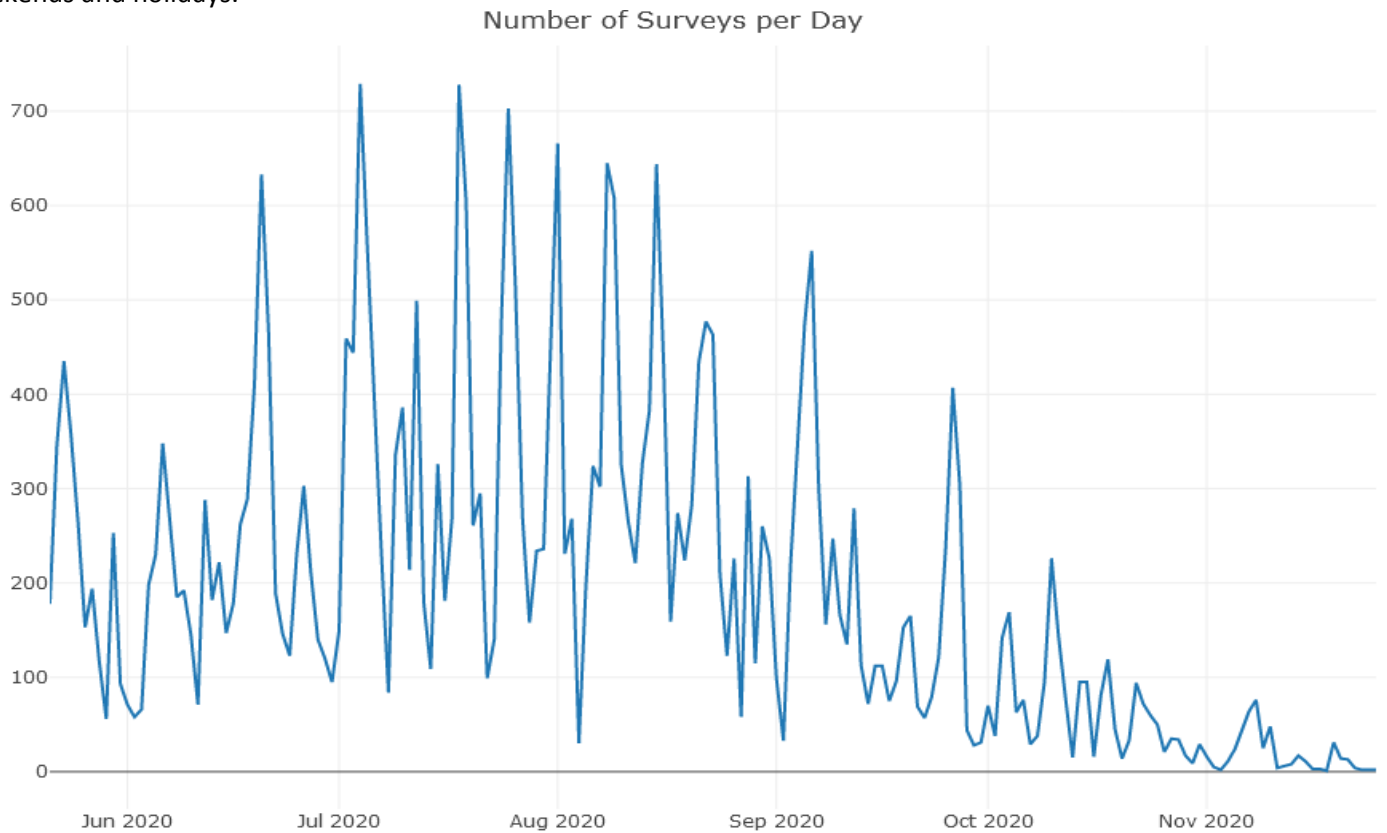


Figure 6: Temporal distribution of staff hours by week throughout the boating season. Weekly total staff hours for 2020 ranged from 81.25 to 1,202.5.

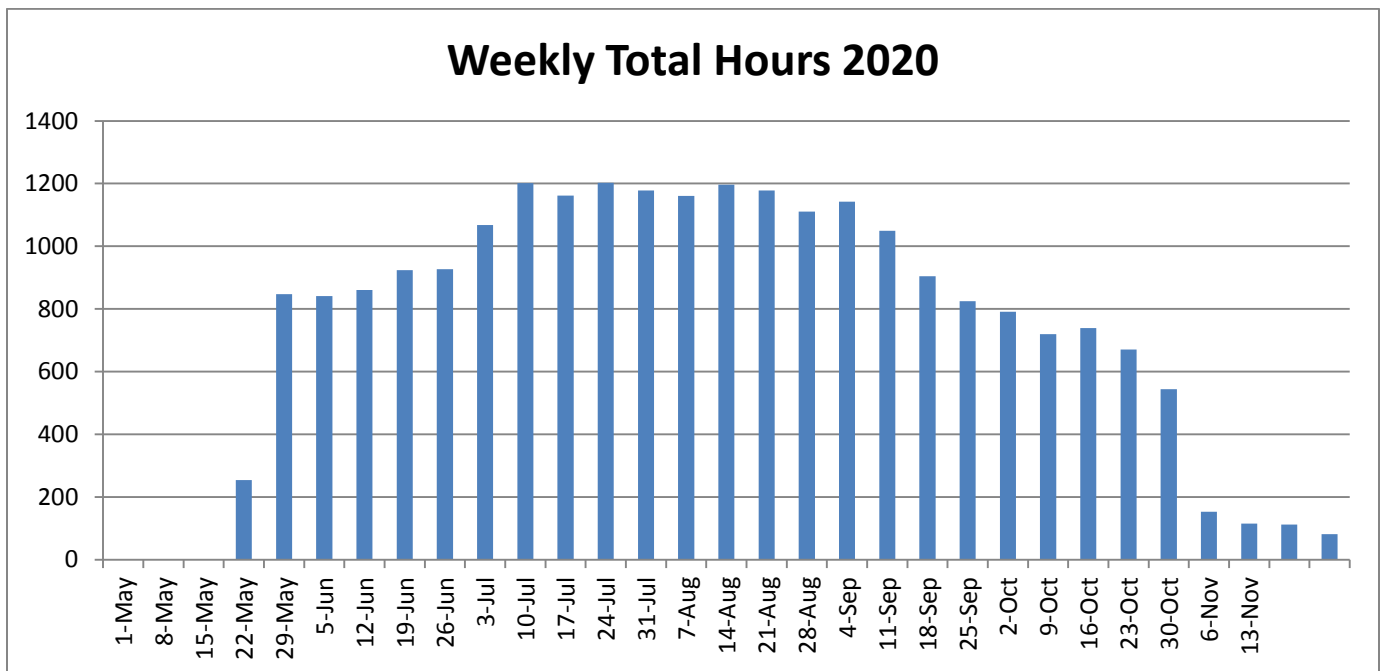
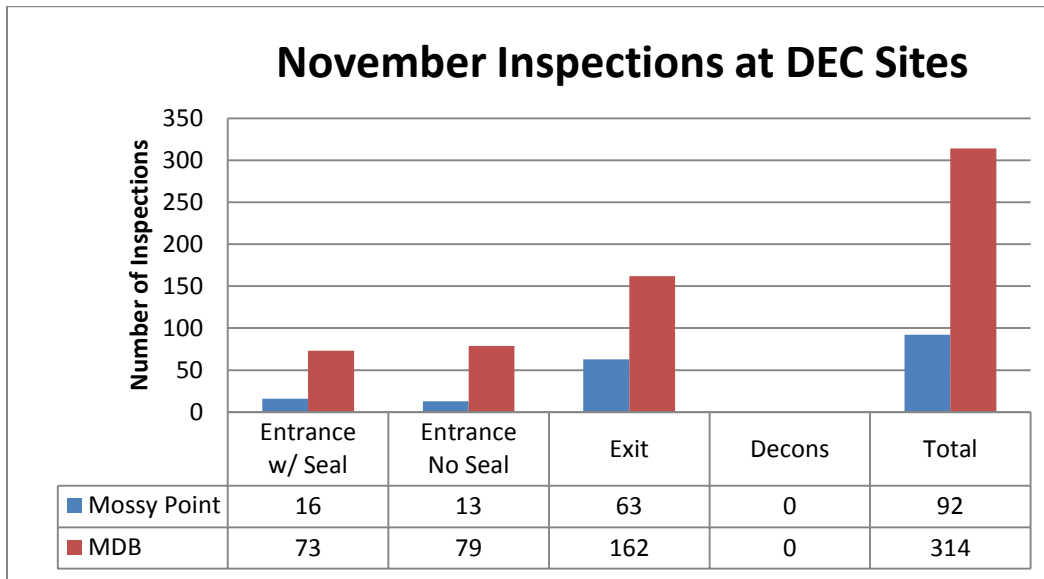


Figure 7: Inspection activity at Mossy Point and Million Dollar Beach in November (Decontamination was not available in November). MDB = Million Dollar Beach



### **END OF 2020 BOAT INSPECTION REPORT** ###