

Aquatic Invasive Species Management Report

Schroon Lake

2020 Final Report

Prepared By:

INVASIVE SOLUTIONS



DIVE COMPANY, LLC

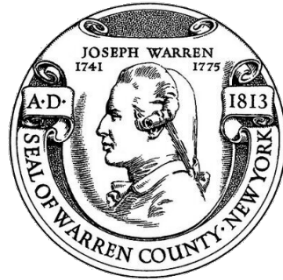
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Acknowledgments

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Funding for the Department's milfoil control activities is through a Memorandum of Agreements between the District and the Town of Chester, Town of Horicon and Town of Schroon.



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Preface

Everyone at Invasive Solutions would like to thank the County of Warren, the Town of Chester, the Town of Horicon, the Town of Schroon, and all the folks we worked with throughout the year for their time, understanding, hard work, and commitment to ensuring Schroon Lake continued its path to success. Additionally, we would like to thank the lake associations and volunteers for their continued commitment and hard work in the common goal of success. There is always a lot of work going on behind the scenes bringing everything together and working to better understand the intricacies of the lake, leading to the better management of the lake as a whole. The 2020 season wrapped up as another successful year, and as always, we are excited to be a part of team that makes it happen. It may be a little early yet, but we can't wait to get back on the beautiful Schroon Lake and do it all again.

Introduction

The 2020 harvest season consisted of four weeks, one in June, one in July, and two in August. Weeks were scheduled to try to best fit the varying growing cycles of the different aquatic invasive species (AIS) located within the lake and the time constraints and needs of the harvesting team.

Week one was in part scheduled to address the earlier growing cycle of Curly-leaf Pondweed (CLPW,) using its earlier emergence among other plants to our advantage, and addressing it before it has the chance to complete its growing cycle. Additionally, we use this week to address both high trafficked sites and sites we outline as priority based upon harvesting results from the year(s) prior.

The second and third week were scheduled back-to-back to allow for a more efficient and fluid harvest for the dive team, allowing them the flexibility to adjust their harvesting schedule as needed. Generally, these weeks we start off working high priority sites based upon previous determinations and current conditions and try to cover as much ground as we can.

The fourth week we focus on ensuring we've had the chance to visit all the sites throughout the lake, revisit sites which we've determined need a follow-on harvest, and address as many AIS sightings and reports as able if there are any which have not been followed up on.

Overall, we saw a 51.4% decrease in pounds of AIS harvested in comparison to 2019, with a total harvested weight of 543 lbs. versus 1,117 lbs. This year marked the second year in decreased harvested weight, down 58% from 2018's 1301 lbs. harvested. Of the 27 sites throughout the lake, 10 saw some level of increase in harvest numbers, 13 saw a decrease in harvest numbers, 8 produced AIS in amounts too low to weigh, and 4 produced no AIS at all. Furthermore, the top three producing sites from 2019 saw a reduction in numbers of 68.3%, 65%, and 94.7%.

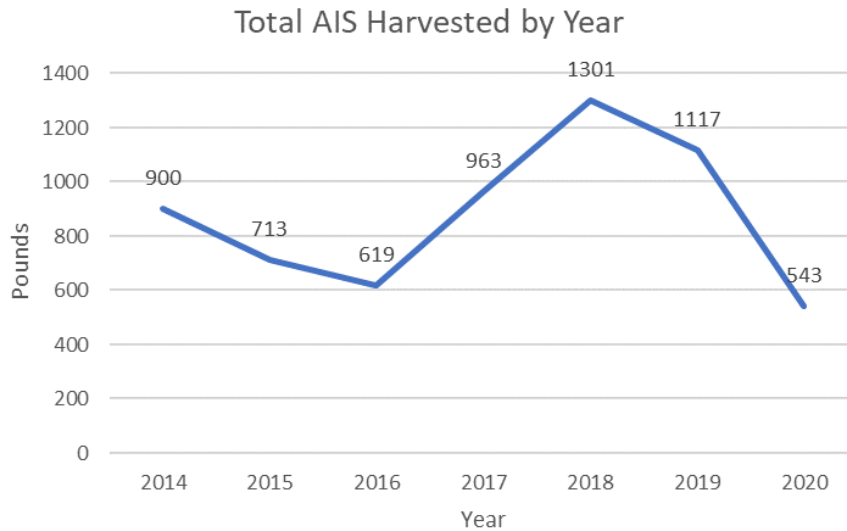
Methodology

The successful harvesting of aquatic invasive species is an ever-evolving world which requires knowledge in many areas to include the bodies of water and their specific tendencies, especially in relation to their natural flow and prevailing winds, seasonal changes, historical AIS data and patterns, and knowledge of AIS and their life cycles. Considering the many variables, we develop a foundation for a management plan to lay the groundwork for the harvest season, while still allowing flexibility for minor changes in harvesting methods to ensure the best harvesting practices are always being employed.

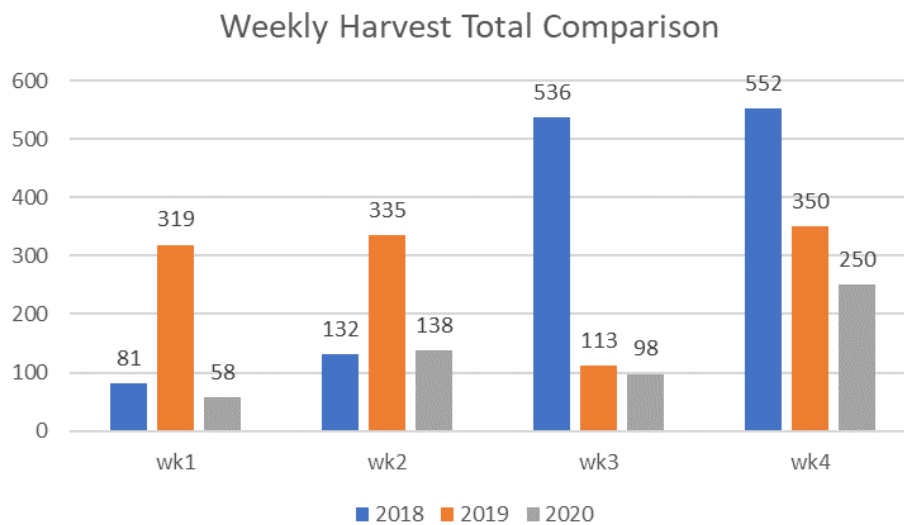
For the management of Schroon Lake, we begin planning by using historical harvest data to prioritize site management based upon factors like historical plant densities, harvesting trends, the location of AIS sites, and AIS type and life cycles. Throughout the season, our Crew collects data, to include plant locations via GPS waypoints, plant size and life stage, harvest weights, and general data specific to the plant location, all of which is considered throughout the year and successive years.

Starting the season, we begin harvests based off our prior planning for the year, working accordingly and making sure to best utilize the time available, and progress and adapt our management as dictated by our findings. We are continuously monitoring the growth cycle of the AIS to ensure we are using the most effective harvesting techniques for the most thorough removal of all AIS plant matter, while leaving in place the native plant communities. At the conclusion of each harvest week, we generate a report to reflect our findings and show the progress being made throughout the lake.

Harvest Numbers

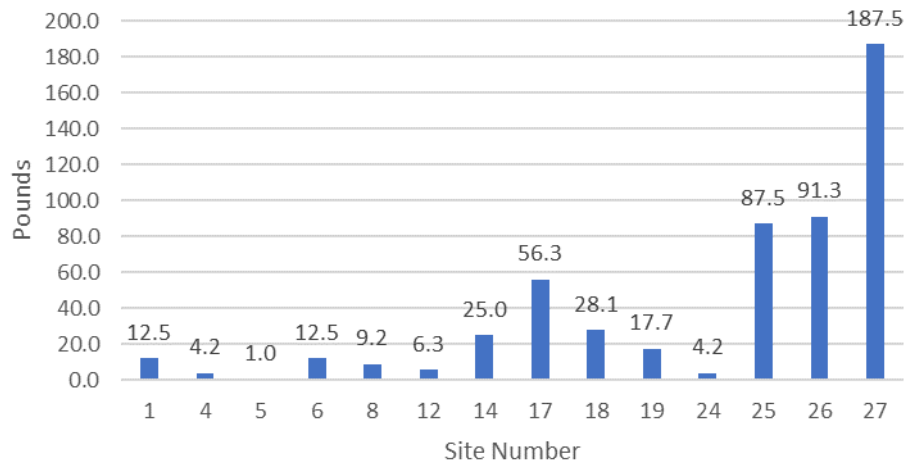


Yearly Change in Lbs. Harvested	
2019-2020	-51.4%
2018-2019	-14.1%
2017-2018	35.2%
2016-2017	55.6%
2015-2016	-13.2%
2014-2015	-20.8%



Note: Week 4 is consistently the highest producing week.

2020 Pounds Harvested by Site

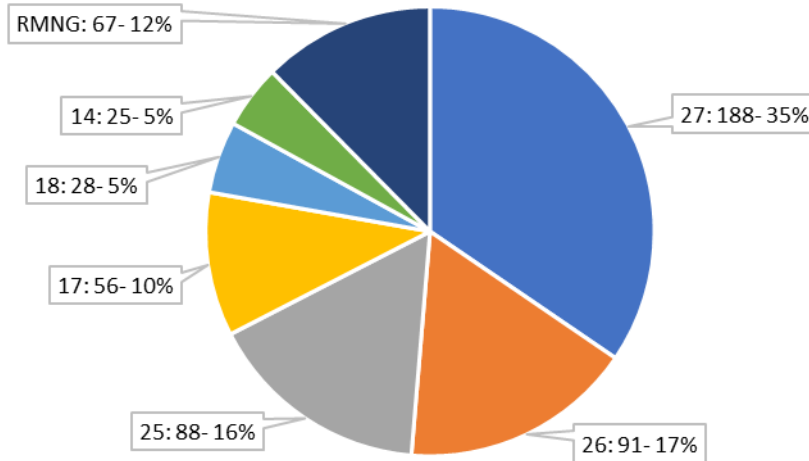


Note: This graph does not include sites without AIS (sites 7, 9, 10, 13, 21) or sites with too little AIS harvested to weigh (sites 2, 3, 11, 15, 16, 20, 22, 23)

Pounds Harvested per Site: 2018 - 2020									
Site #	2018	2019	2020	% Change	Site #	2018	2019	2020	% Change
1	111.5	237.5	12.5	-94.7%	15	0.6	0.0	(11 EWM)	+11
2	0.0	(6 AIS)	(10 AIS)	+4	16	6.3	(3 EWM)	(35 EWM)	+32
3	0.0	(8 EWM)	(2 EWM)	-6	17	11.1	25.0	56.3	125.0%
4	481.3	31.3	4.2	-86.7%	18	9.4	16.7	28.1	68.7%
5	5.0	87.5	1.0	-98.9%	19	21.9	31.3	17.7	-43.3%
6	6.3	(8 EWM)	12.5		20	143.8	(5 EWM)	(28 EWM)	+23
7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%	21	50.0	3.1	0.0	-100.0%
8	55.0	18.8	9.2	-51.1%	22	12.5	(15 EWM)	(7 EWM)	-8
9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%	23	6.3	9.4	(3 AIS)	-99.0%
10	(3 EWM)	(1 EWM)	0.0	-1	24	12.5	6.3	4.2	-33.3%
11	0.0	0.0	(1 EWM)	0	25	68.8	250.0	87.5	-65.0%
12	11.3	6.3	6.3	0.0%	26	37.5	287.5	91.3	-68.3%
13	(1 EWM)	0.0	0.0	0.0%	27	68.8	87.5	187.5	114.3%
14	181.9	18.8	25.0	33.3%	Total	1301.3	1116.7	543.1	-51.4%

Highest Yielding Sites

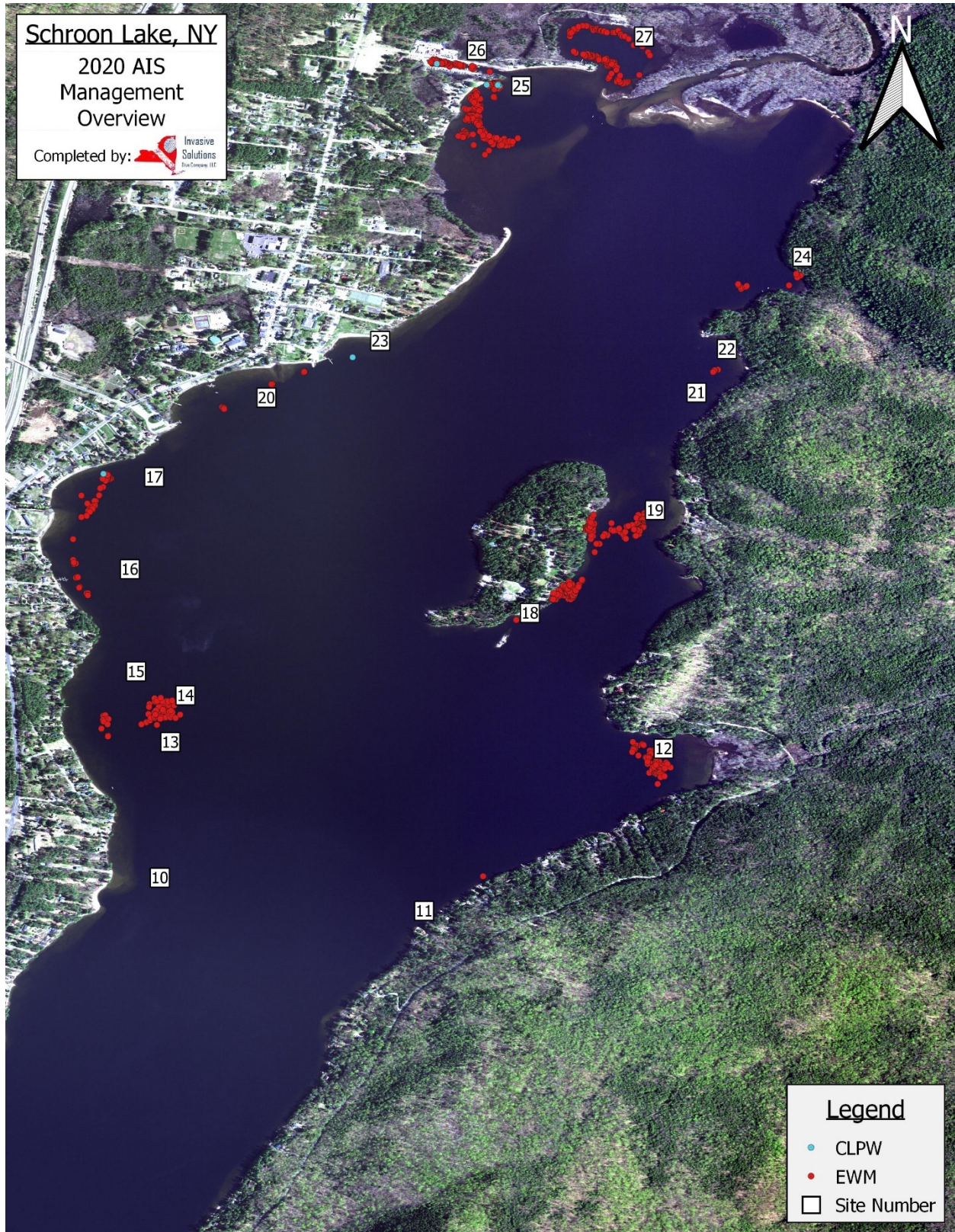
[site #: lbs harvested- % of total harvested weight]



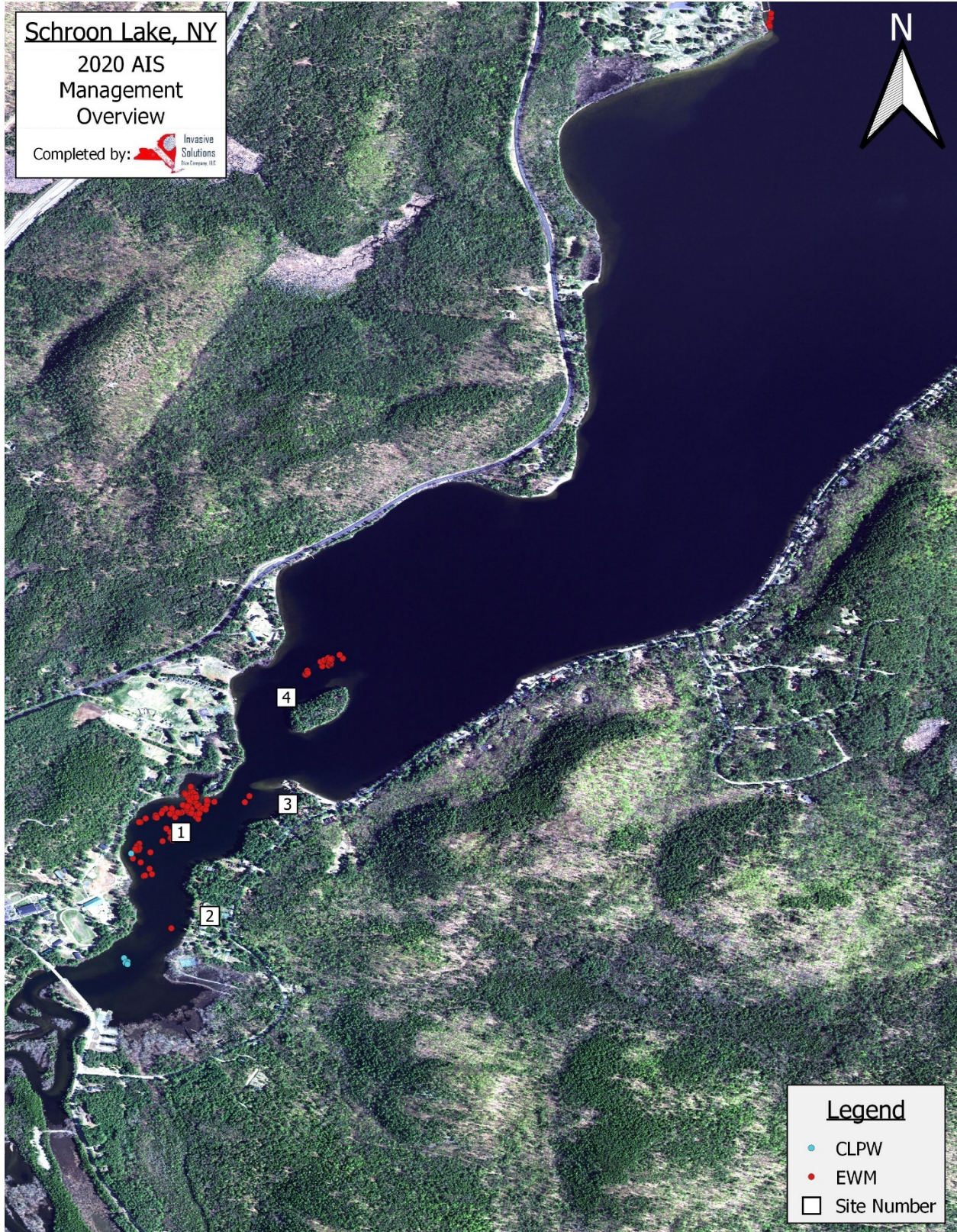
2020 total harvested weight is 543 lbs.

Note: RMNG represents the 21 remaining sites not specifically depicted in the chart.

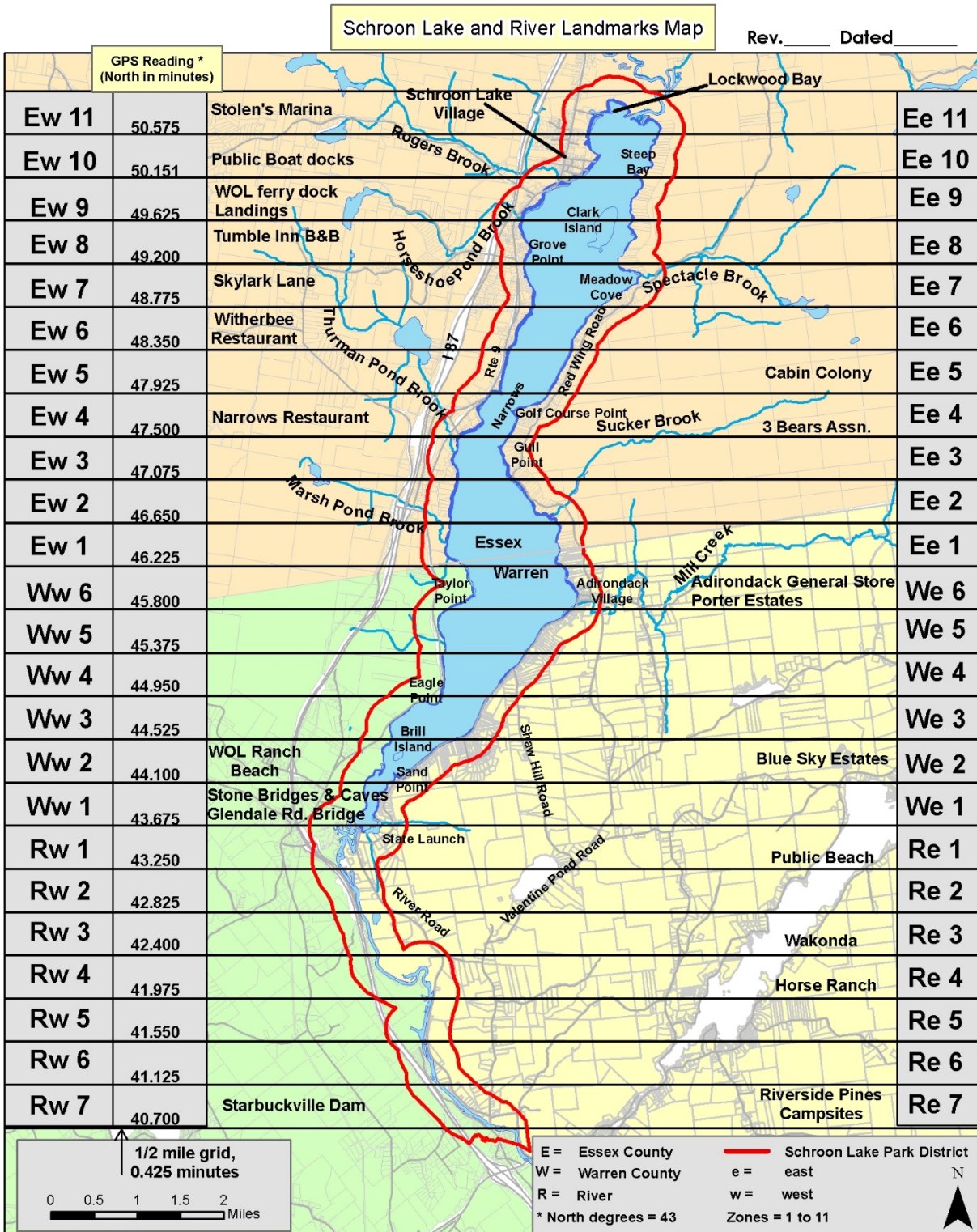
Site Maps







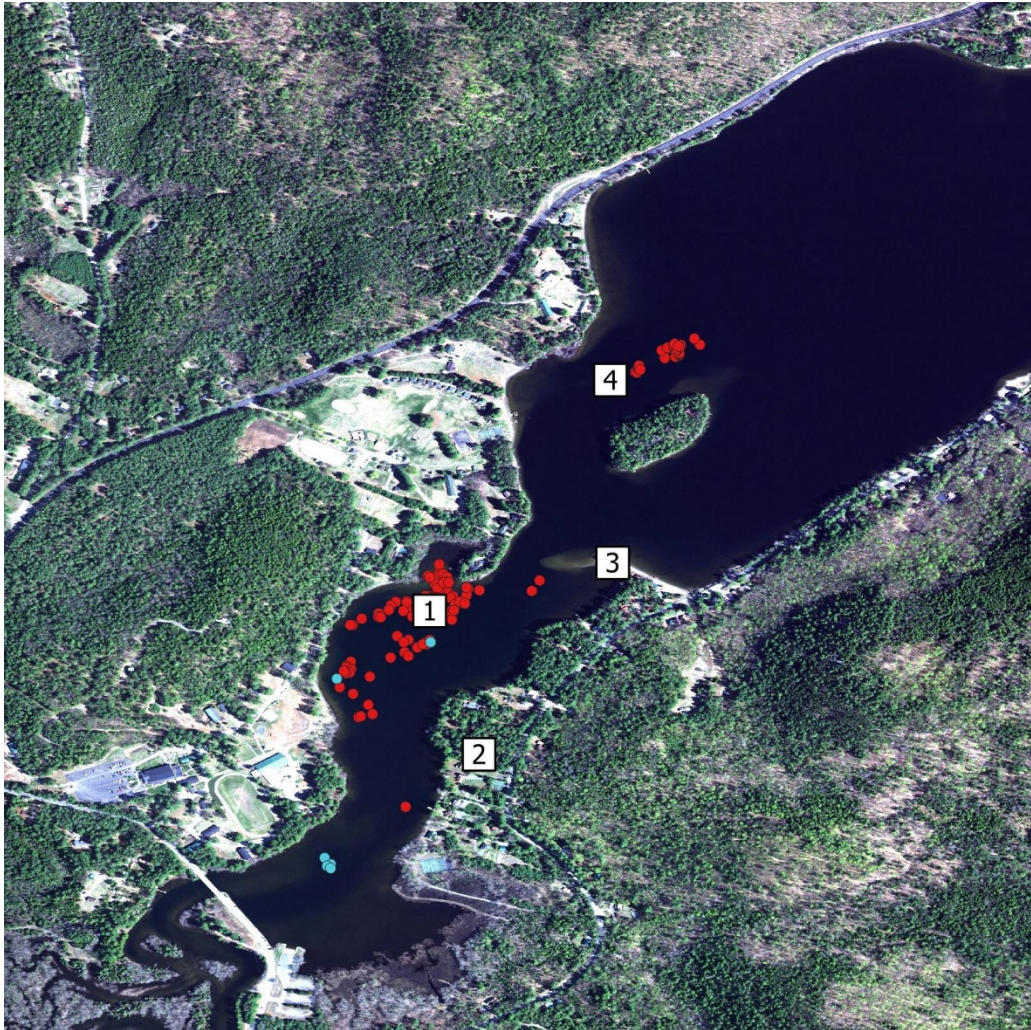
Scout Map



Site Reference Sheet

AIS Site Quick Reference List				
Scout ID	Site #	Description	Latitude	Longitude
Ww2	1	Word of Life Bay	43.733821	-73.806834
Ww1	2	Area S of Word of Life Bay	43.730379	-73.806063
We2	3	Sandy cove NE of Word of Life Bay	43.735174	-73.802347
Ww2	4	WOL Ranch/ west of Brill Island	43.73969	-73.802587
We6	5	ADK lodges	43.736233	-73.759102
Ew1	6	Taylor Point (Ww6) to cove N of T. Point	43.772513	-73.788131
Ew3	7	cove due W of Gull Point	43.791644	-73.786752
Ew4	8	West Narrows	43.79764	-73.778423
Ww4	9	East Narrows	43.795927	-73.773426
Ew6	10	western point N of Narrows	43.81325	-73.768001
Ee7	11	E shore N of Narrows	43.811917	-73.756675
Ee7	12	Meadow Cove	43.818627	-73.746396
Ew7	13	Skylark S	43.818865	-73.768096
Ew7	14	Skylark	43.820483	-73.766383
Ew8	15	S of Grove Point	43.821197	-73.768905
Ew8	16	N of Grove Point	43.825623	-73.769667
Ew9	17	The Landings N	43.829287	-73.768905
Ee8	18	Clark Island S	43.823719	-73.752392
Ee8 & Ee9	19	Clark Island narrows and N shore	43.827859	-73.747395
Ew9	20	WOL Island Dock to Rogers Brook	43.832666	-73.764004
Ee9	21	N of Narrows to Steep Point Cove	43.832285	-73.745824
Ee9	22	Steep Point Cove	43.83476	-73.744206
Ew9	23	Town of Schroon Boat Launch N	43.83476	-73.759007
Ee10	24	Steep Bay and surrounding shores	43.837853	-73.741589
Ew11	25	Terra Alta	43.844706	-73.753724
Ew11	26	Schroon Lake Marina	43.846324	-73.754628
Ew11	27	Lockwood Bay	43.846562	-73.748489

Site Summaries

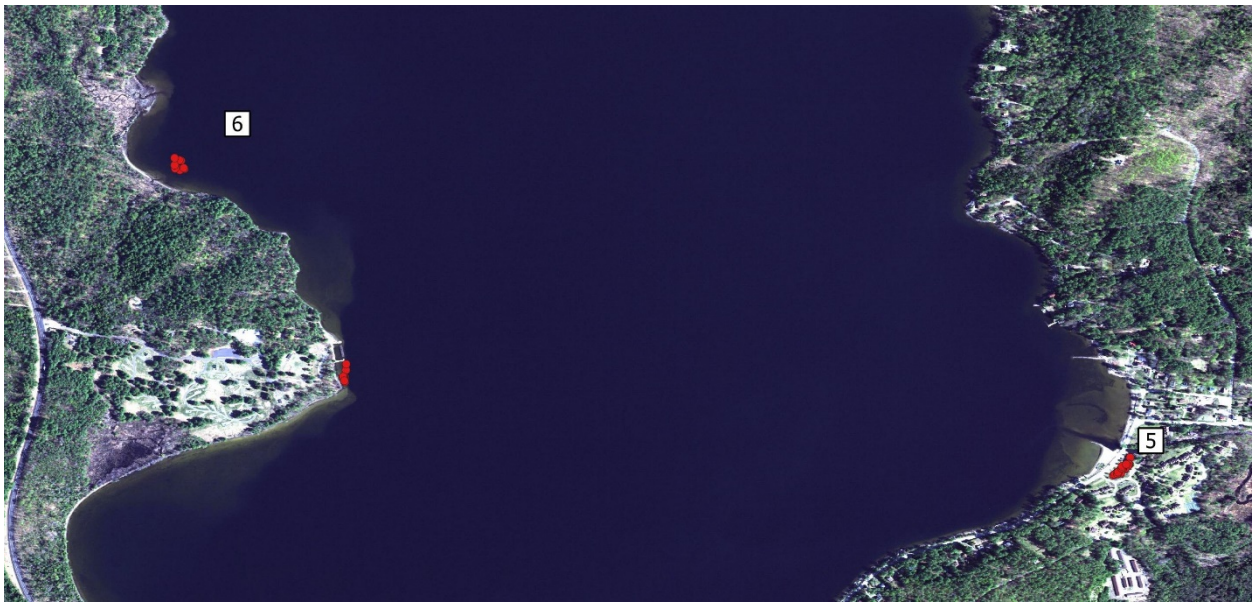


Site 1- Word of Life Bay (Ww1)- This season we harvested 12.5 lbs. of AIS, mainly EWM with a couple CLPW, which was a drastic 95% reduction from the previous year's 238 lbs. Because of the prior season's high numbers, plus the high amount of boat traffic experienced within the site, we prioritized this site for the first week of the season. The littoral in the site is large with scattered native plants, and interestingly, divers commented the area seemed to be more abundant with native milfoil. It should be noted this site did not receive a follow-on harvest this year as typically done.

Site 2- Area south of Word of Life Bay (Ww1)- This site is a large area with varying densities of native vegetation and low numbers of CLPW and EWM. This site is searched when harvesting other sites in the region, with a focus on the historically producing areas.

[Site 3- Sandy Cove NW of Word of Life Bay \(We2\)](#)- This site is a small area which produces very low numbers of EWM, located within a patch of native vegetation. This site is searched when harvesting other sites in the region.

[Site 4- Word of Life Ranch/ west of Brill Island \(Ww2\)](#)- In 2018 there was a new EWM patch area located on the west side of the island, which in turn produced unusually high harvests numbers (481 lbs.) Although the added harvest area increased the size of the work site, we have been seeing a drop in harvest numbers since addressed. This season we harvested 4.2 lbs., down from 2019's 31.3 lbs. Although not overly concerning, there was a site inspection completed after the conclusion of the season which identified up to 20 EWM plants within the site which should be investigated the following year.



[Site 5- ADK Lodges \(We6\)](#)- This site only yielded 1 lb. of EWM, a drastic reduction from last year's 87.5 lbs. Because of the high boat traffic within the site, we typically work this site early in the season to try to get ahead of any plant growth and peak season boat traffic. As most years, we found a lighter density of EWM generally growing along the edges of the bay.

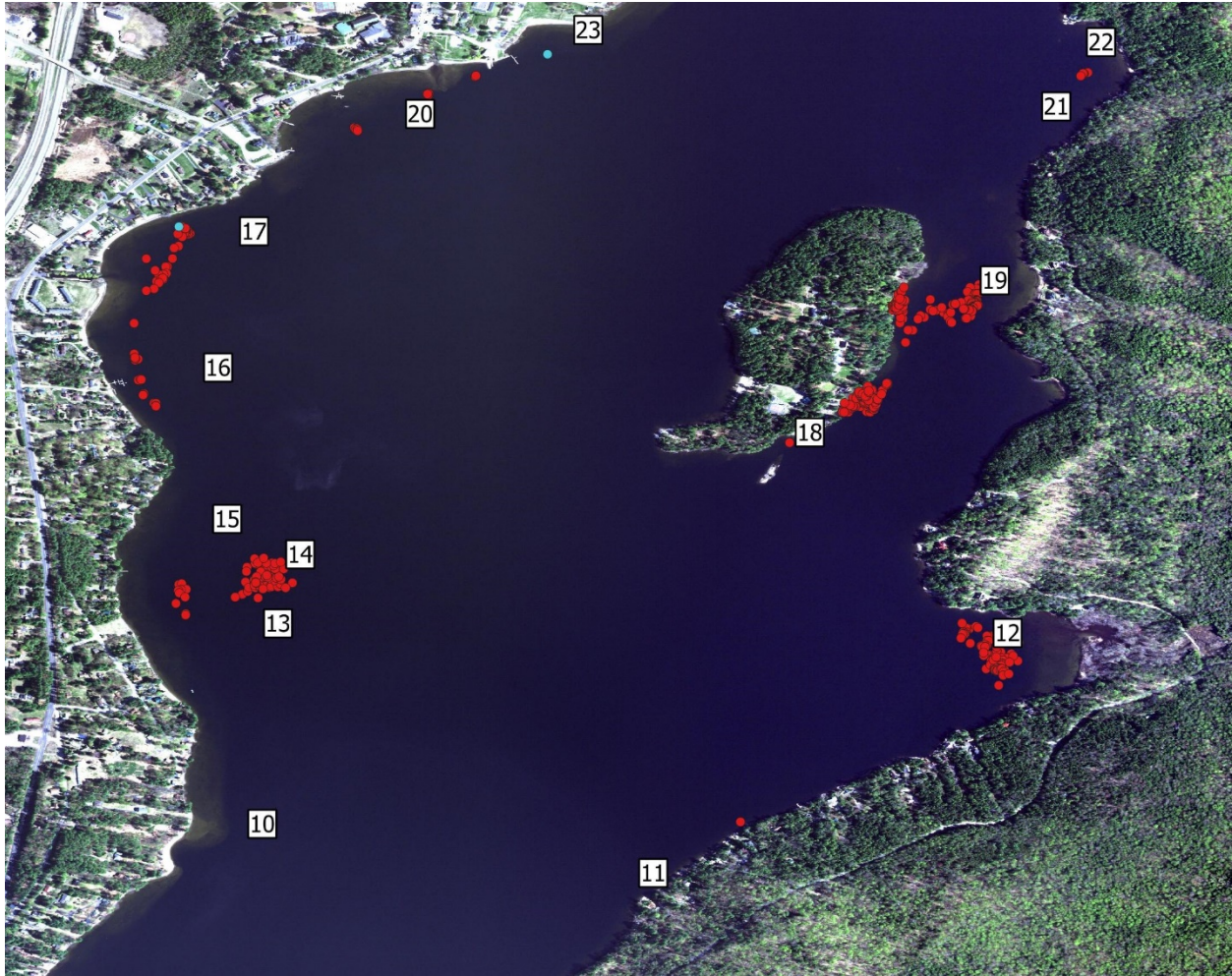
[Site 6- Taylor Point to the cove north of Taylor Point \(Ww6\)](#)- The cove north of Taylor Point has historically been what is considered site 6. Within that area, we typically harvest limited EWM scattered within native plants (2020-22 EWM, 2019-8 EWM). This year, we harvested a dense area of EWM north of Taylor Point, just south of the docks, accounting for the 12.5 lbs. harvested. Both areas will be monitored and worked in future seasons.



[Site 7- Cove due west of Gull Point \(Ew3\)](#)- This site is a small cove with multiple docks and a native plant bed area which gets searched. This site does not produce AIS yearly and is considered non-priority. No AIS harvested.

[Site 8- West Narrows \(Ew4\)](#)- This site continues to see a decrease in EWM, with 9.2 lbs. harvested, compared to 2019- 18.8 lbs., and 2018- 55 lbs. The site has two distinct areas, an area on the southern shore which has EWM mixed within lily pads, and a much larger section of native vegetation which runs along the edge of the littoral in the center of the cove.

[Site 9- East Narrows \(Ww4\)](#)- This small site focuses around two docks and the area immediately south. No AIS has been located since 2016.



[Site 10- Western point north of Narrows \(Ew6\)](#)- This site consists of a strip of native vegetation which does not produce AIS yearly and is considered non-priority. No AIS harvested.

[Site 11- East shore north of Narrows \(Ee7\)](#)- This site consists of a thin strip of native vegetation which parallels shore, does not produce AIS yearly, and is considered non-priority. 1 EWM harvested.

[Site 12- Meadow Cove \(Ee7\)](#)- This site seems to be a generally self-contained and produces consistent, low volume (2020/2019- 6.3 lbs., 2018- 11.3 lbs.) EWM with one CLPW outlier in 2019, mixed among native vegetation. With the larger size of this cove and the healthy native plant populations, this site is time-consuming site to work. This year divers had noted they were harvesting very consistently sized, newer growth EWM throughout the site. The Crew elected to expand their search area, locating larger EWM further west in the site, then continued to harvest the area further north within the cove.

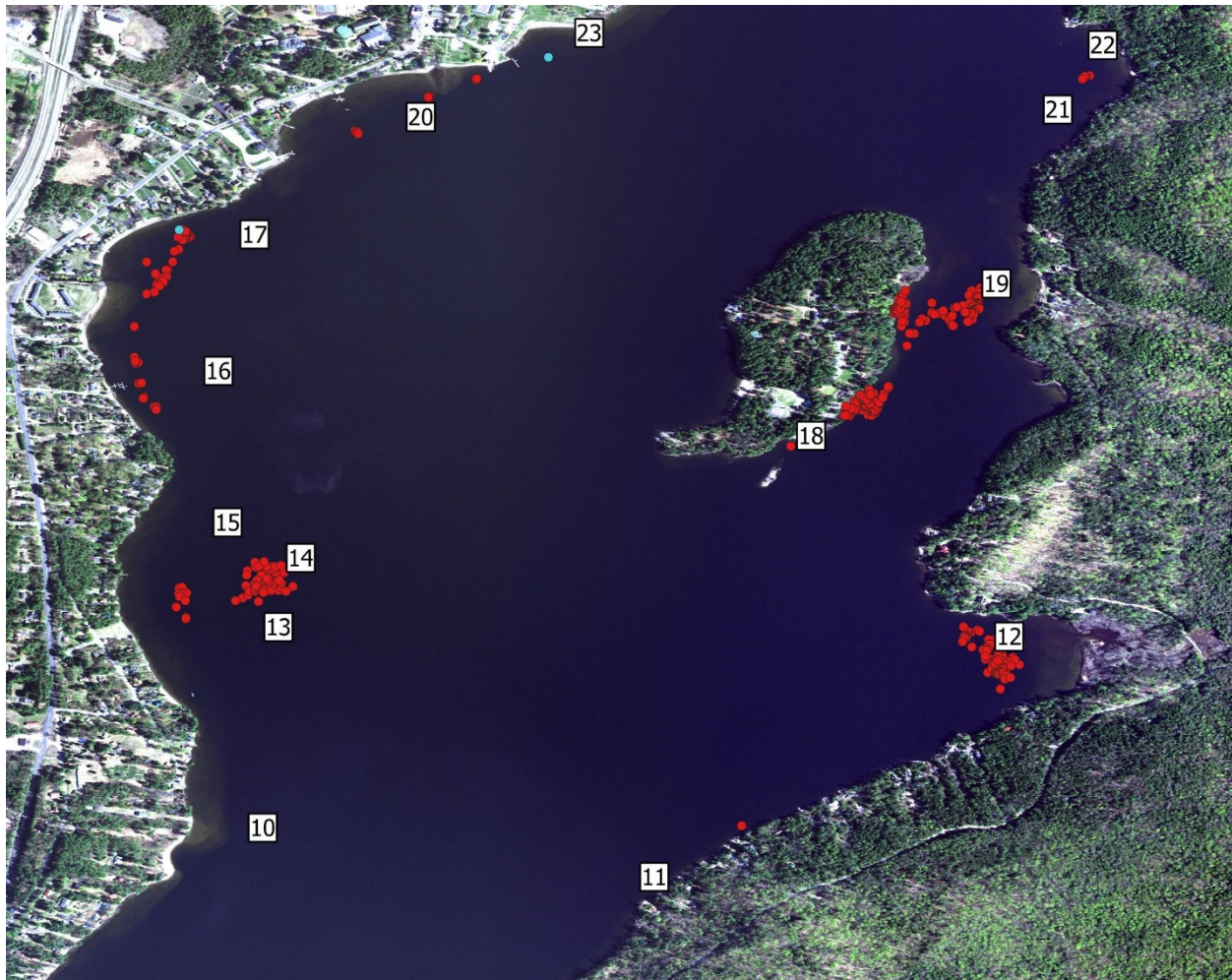
[Site 13- Skylark south \(Ew7\)](#)- This site consists of a strip of native vegetation south of site 15, which inconsistently harbors EWM. No AIS located.

Site 14- Skylark Area (Ew7)- This site is a large area located east of sites 13 and 15 and is situated in open water, up to approximately 400 yards from shore. This site takes extra care to set a highly visible work area to ensure Crew safety from highspeed passing boats. Because of the site's size and location, it is often a more time-consuming site to complete. The area is made up of native plant populations with EWM often peppered throughout. We saw a total harvest of 25 lbs. of EWM, a 33% increase from 2019, yet well below 2018's 182 lbs. harvested.

Site 15- South of Grove Point (Ew8)- This site consists of a native plant bed located west of site 14 which inconsistently harbors EWM, generally in the south half of the site. 11 EWM harvested.

Site 16- North of Grove Point (Ew8)- This site is a continuation of the thin native plant bed following the bathymetry from site 17, which runs along the outskirts of the docks in the area. This year we harvested 35 EWM, up from last year's 3, but down drastically from over 6 lbs. (100+) in 2018.

Site 17- The Landings north (Ew9)- This site is located outside the Word of Life ferry dock landings and stretches from an area south of Horseshoe Pond Brook, north, presumably following the littoral and bathymetry of this western bay area. The plant bed in the south of the site grows in a thinner line following the edge of the brook delta, and as you work the plants north, they expand east and west over a wider area. Additionally, as you work into shallower areas in the northern part of this site, the plant community becomes very dense with elodea, which is where the higher densities of EWM and sporadic CLPW are located. The dense native plants make harvesting more difficult, making root systems harder to fully identify and remove, and smaller AIS growth and fragmentation difficult to locate. This year there was 56.3 lbs. of EWM harvested, which is a 125% increase from 2019's 25 lbs., up further from 2018's 11.1 lbs. harvested. Of total harvest weight, almost 89% (or 50 lbs.) was removed from a moderately dense patch located within elodea in this far northern section. Upon a follow-up site inspection after the conclusion of the harvest season (one month later,) the dense harvest area to the north was observed to have 50-100 observable EWM plants. This site is top priority for the following year and needs to be worked early and later in the season.



Site 18- Clark Island south (Ee8)- Although not found in great volume, EWM has been increasing in abundance on the east side of the island over the past few years, from 9.4 lbs. in 2018, to 16.7 lbs. in 2019, and finally up 69% to 28.1 lbs. this season. However, it should be noted, due to the added barge traffic and rise in AIS numbers within the site, we increased the frequency we harvest starting in 2019. The area which consistently holds the most EWM begins at a point east of the barge dock, extending about 200 ft east and 300 ft north, mixed within native vegetation. Additionally, EWM is often found close to shore caught in over hanging trees and has been found flowering as early as late June.

Site 19- Clark Island narrows (Ee8) and the north shore (Ee9)- This site begins about midway of the island, continuing north 200 yards, and extends east across narrows. This year we saw a 43% decrease in EWM harvested, down to 17.7 lbs., and no CLPW. The AIS within the site is mixed with native vegetation, and both decrease in density as you work east. In a follow-on harvest of the east side of the island (one month after the previous harvest,) the harvest team was finding sporadic newer growth within the site and continued to work the area east. As the team worked east, they began encountering EWM more consistently and elected to continue to explore outside of the historical harvest area. The Crew located EWM almost 2/3 the way across the narrows before running out of time. This eastern work

section effectively doubled the size of the harvest site but could help explain the EWM which keeps collecting along the east shore of the island. This area will need further exploration and management in the follow-on season.

Site 20- WOL Island Dock to Rogers Brook (Ew9)- This site has a band of native plants approximately 100 yards off the shoreline which runs north towards Rogers Brook. This site sees small populations of EWM which are quickly addressed when located. In 2018, there was 144 lbs. of EWM harvested in a concentrated area east of the WOL beach, but since is located sparingly.

Site 21- North of Narrows to Steep Point Cove/ 22- Steep Point Cove (Ee9)- Site 21 starts north of the narrows on the east shore and continues north to Site 22. EWM is typically located in low numbers in these sites, with no plants harvested in site 21 and 7 harvested in site 22 this year. EWM tends to establish in the same historical areas, to include the native vegetation which runs north towards Steep Point approximately 75 yards west of the shoreline, and within the rockier shallow hazard areas to the east.

Site 23- Town of Schroon Boat Launch N (Ew9)- This site focuses on three main areas which are inspected for both EWM and CLPW. The main area focuses on a native plant bed just outside the Schroon Beach Swimming area. This area typically accounts for the bulk of the AIS harvested from the site and has a history of harboring both EWM and CLPW. The other two spots focus on the public boat launch/ dock area, and the hazard buoy and accompanying littoral to the west. These areas are inspected early in the season due to the high volume of boater traffic within the locality throughout the year.



[Site 24- Steep Bay \(Ee10\)](#)- This site has seen a steady decline in EWM presence over the past three years, from 12.5 lbs. in 2018 (to include CLPW,) 6.3 lbs. in 2019, to 4.2 lbs. this season. The bay has diverse native vegetation and AIS tends follow a general contour which runs from the northern shore of the northern divot along the center bump between the two divots, then extends west and wraps back towards the southwest tip of the southern divot.

[Site 25- Terra Alta \(Ew11\)](#)- Terra Alta is a large area located just outside the Schroon Lake Marina and runs along the shoreline of the Terra Alta cottages. This site sees regular increased boat traffic, consistently harbors both EWM and CLPW, is annually among the highest volume producing sites, as well as the most time consuming.

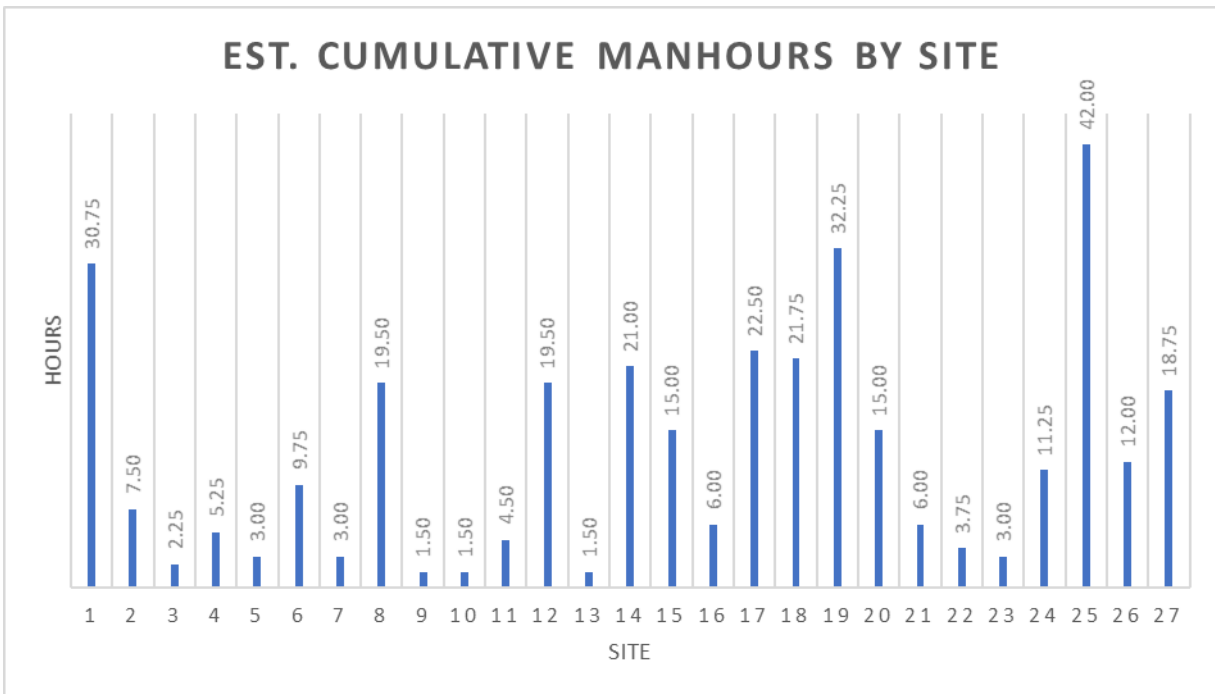
The management area within the site generally takes the shape of a crescent moon, starting just outside of the marina near the channel markers, with a native plant/ bass weed patch which runs west towards the shore. At that first dock is a Lily pad patch which typically has EWM and CLPW mixed within. Working in a counterclockwise direction, you find scattered EWM with occasional EWM clusters mixed within the native vegetation. Continuing south, as you near the buoyed swim area, EWM density begins increasing, becoming even more abundant south of the swim area, as a moderate density mixed within native plants. Continuing east through the site away from the shore, EWM grows along the northern edge of a Lily pad patch, eventually becoming sparse within the area, and ending at a point about 220 yards from shore. Additionally, EWM can be found within the Lily pads, but swimming/ harvesting in the area is difficult and time consuming.

[Site 26- Schroon Lake Marina \(Ew11\)](#)- This site tends to see fluctuations in harvested AIS (2018- 37.5 lbs. 2019- 287.5 lbs., 2020- 91.3 lbs.), with a 68% reduction in harvested weight compared to last year, consisting of mostly EWM with occasional CLPW. Overall, this site is generally shallow with dense native plant beds, encounters high boat traffic, and uncoincidentally experiences high AIS fragmentation likely contributing to the persistency of and fluctuations in AIS numbers. Given these parameters, this site is worked at the start of the season to immediately reduce the presence of AIS and requires follow-up harvest(s) to keep on ahead of it, helping to prevent its spread both in and outside of the bay.

[Site 27- Lockwood Bay \(Ew11\)](#)- Lockwood Bay has seen an increase of dive hours over the course of the last three years, and congruently an increase in EWM harvested each year. EWM is found throughout native vegetation in a band around the bay which widens near the mouth. The water within the bay appears darker, or more tannic than water outside of the bay, possibly indicating a slower flushing rate. Furthermore, this site seems to experience much lower boat traffic than many other parts of the lake. With overall time constraints of the harvest season, and in part due to the above reasons, this site is often lower in site priority each year.

Time Estimates

Provided within is a breakdown of hourly estimations for major program activities and generalized worksite activity. With a 3-person dive team (Crew,) each crew-hour is reported as 3 manhours. Hourly estimations are reported in 0.25-hour blocks for ease of use.



<u>Cumulative Manhour Estimates</u>	
Harvesting activities	339.75
Meal periods/ decompression breaks	66.00
Lost time due to inclement weather	1.50

Conclusion

Before the season even began, this year seemed like it was kicking off to be an ideal aquatic invasive species growing season; early ice out, warm water, warm air temperatures, lots of sunny blue skies. Even the boating and lake escapades seemed to kick off strong and never slow down. 2020 was a fantastic summer to be on the lake indeed, but fortunately, we can't say the same held true for the invasive species.

When all was said and done, we harvested a total of 543 lbs. of invasive species, over a 51% decrease lake wide compared to last year, and the lowest harvest numbers the lake's experienced since lake-wide management began. Four out of five of the highest producing sites from 2019 saw anywhere from a 65%-98.9% reduction in AIS harvested, with one holding on strong and becoming the top producing site this year, yet given we invested more time in the site than we've ever before, it's almost to be expected. By no means does this mean we are out of the water yet or don't have our work cut out for us, but I would say we're diving in the right direction.

Overall, this harvest season shows there's a method to the madness, and with hard work and persistency great progress can be made. As we continue to manage the lake, we never stop learning about the variations from site to site, what works best where, and pondering how we can do something better. But that's not to forget all the extra hands and minds that get invested on the lake, between the lake associations, the Scouts, Warren County Soil and Water, volunteers and all those who support those supporting the efforts, the all-in approach on Schroon Lake is working.

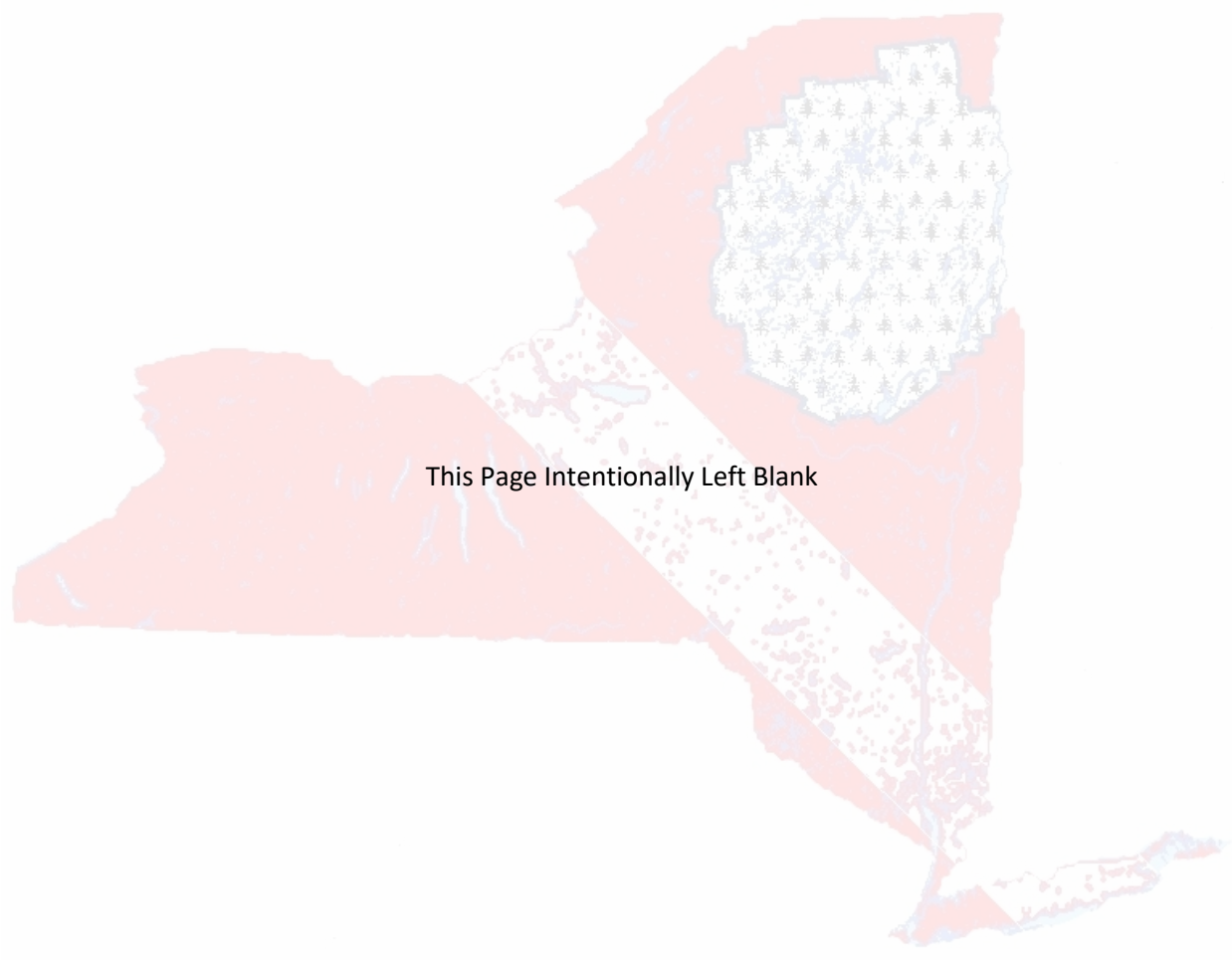
Moving forward, we will continue to evaluate the data collected to prioritize the sites. Considering current and past trends, site use, AIS life cycle, seasonal harvest numbers, past harvesting schedules, etc. we can lay the groundwork, while remaining flexible to react to the needs of the lake as they unfold.

Even with the success of the past few years, one growing issue we are seeing is the area which needs to get covered is expanding. In recent years there's been spots added to include in site 4, a new [old] area in site 6, site 14, just this year site 19 about doubled, all of which gets added to and worked within the same timeframe. As we work to decrease densities within harvest sites, we've been able to harvest through them quicker or skip a follow-up harvest and dedicate more time in other areas. Nevertheless, only so much ground can get covered within a timeframe, and should we continue to see site expansion, or even an exceptionally bad season of weather, we will need to start cutting back harvests from lower priority areas to address the needs at hand. This could result in a see-saw effect, where you see harvest numbers sharply rise and fall in sites over short periods of time, as site priorities get shifted around addressing the highs about the lake.

This year, with follow-up site inspections, there were 3 sites noted to have remaining AIS, one of which (the Landings north) had 50-100 EWM. This site in particular has been seeing an increase of AIS over the past three years and is slated as top priority for next season. Given its lush native plant growth in the problem area, we need to allow time for multiple visits throughout the season to monitor and harvest the site to reverse the trend.

It is strongly advised to add a fifth week to the harvesting schedule. Currently we have a schedule which addresses sites and AIS early within the growing season before any dieback and peak lake activity, in the middle of peak growing season where we do much of the heavy picking while the harvesting conditions are most favorable, and near end of peak growing season after we've had some time between harvests,

ensuring maximum efficiency for the final week. However, each year this last week is our most productive week and leaves the door open for the chance to attend to additional sites, address any late season growth, minimize the AIS' ability of fragmental propagation, and set the following season up for greater success. This time will allow for the expanding work sites to be properly covered without taking away time from other areas, sites which need a follow-up harvest will be allotted the time, sites identified by the lake mapping can be inspected, and ultimately, we believe it would lead to the next level of maintenance phase management throughout the lake.



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