



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **September 29, 2011** Special Meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

Legislature Approves Funds to Eradicate Hydrilla

Meeting in special session, the Legislature approved an emergency appropriation of \$26,100 in contingency funds to enable chemical treatment to eradicate the invasive plant species Hydrilla from the Cayuga Inlet. The vote was a unanimous 11-0, with Legislators Kathy Luz Herrera, Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Frank Proto, and Brian Robison excused.

The Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District is working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the New York State Canal Corporation, the City of Ithaca, and Tompkins County to address the problem, and it has been determined that the most effective way to eradicate Hydrilla is to apply the herbicide endothal this year, with follow-up applications during the next five years, at least.

Cost of the first herbicide treatment is estimated at \$91,100, with \$50,000 provided by the DEC and \$15,000 in product contributed by the herbicide manufacturer. The Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District asked the County to provide funds to underwrite the rest of the cost of this year's initial treatment.

Holly Menninger and Roxanna Johnston, representing the local Hydrilla Task Force, noted that action is urgently needed now, since Hydrilla is one of the most aggressive aquatic plants to invade North America and, if not immediately contained, would likely spread through New York's interconnected system of waterways, causing significant environmental and economic harm. Legislators were warned that, without corrective action, Hydrilla could clog the entire Inlet in three to five years and that the potential for spread throughout the region is "enormous."

As part of its action, the Legislature strongly encourages the State to fully fund the treatment cost and directs the County Administrator to seek State reimbursement for the treatment costs—Legislators were told a dual appeal on the part of the County and the City is expected—and, in absence of such support, to seek contributions from other key stakeholders, including the City of Ithaca, Cornell University, and Ithaca College, to reduce the County cost.

Legislature Chair Martha Robertson has directed the Legislature's Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee to examine and recommend action on longer term aspects of mitigating the Hydrilla problem, including such issues as whether to urge the State legislature to allocate funding for the DEC to support the ongoing future eradication costs.

Contact: Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature, 274-5434 or 272-0584; Legislator Dooley Kiefer, 257-7453.

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