

# Recent sunny weather may mean a bumper crop for Alaska's *Elodea* infestations!



*Elodea* survives under ice. This specimen is from Stormy Lake on the Kenai Peninsula.

*Elodea*. Believed to be Alaska's first fully submerged aquatic invasive plant, you may have seen *Elodea* choking out areas of Sand Lake, Little Campbell Lake, or Delong Lake in Anchorage and Chena Slough in Fairbanks. It's also being found in a growing number of lakes and slow moving rivers/sloughs in Cordova and on the Kenai Peninsula.

## Should we be concerned?

Yes! *Elodea* survives under ice. When introduced to a new waterway, *Elodea* grows rapidly, overtaking native

plants, filling the water column, and changing the habitat conditions to which native fish and wildlife are adapted. Thick mats form at or just below the water surface and can foul boat propellers and floatplane rudders, causing a hazard. In addition to impeding fishing, navigation, boat launching, and paddling, it can also reduce waterfront property values.



This photo was taken underwater in Chena Lake near Fairbanks. Thick mats of *Elodea* at or near the surface can impede fishing and cause a hazard.



Team founder of the Anchorage Rowing Association and long-time rower Marietta "Ed" Hall explained,

*"As a rower on Sand Lake since 1998, the recent exponential growth in Elodea has been shocking. When I pass over certain sections of the lake Elodea snags my small six inch keel and nearly capsizes me. It's obvious how damaging this weed will become to all users if it's not controlled."*

The growing negative impact of *Elodea* can most recently be seen in the closure of Stormy Lake (located within the Captain Cook State Recreation Area near Nikiski) to watercraft and aircraft for the 2013 summer season in an effort to prevent its spread.

How does it spread? Fragments of *Elodea* snagged by watercraft, trailers, floats planes or other outdoor equipment are easily spread to new waters. New infestations can also result from intentional (albeit well-meaning) releases from school/home aquariums (In Alaska, live specimens of *Elodea* are used to teach students about cell structure—it's also a popular aquarium plant).

Although *Elodea* has only been confirmed in 15 waterbodies in Alaska to date, its foothold in float plane lakes like Sand Lake (only three miles away from Alaska's busiest float plane base, Lake Hood) make it only one step away from invading any number of additional waters across the state.



*Elodea* fragments along the shoreline of Sand Lake in Anchorage. Snagged by watercraft, trailers, and float planes, these fragments are easily transported to new waters

## YOU CAN HELP!

- **Support eradication efforts.** *Elodea* is expensive and difficult to control
- **Teachers, students & aquarium hobbyists:** don't let it loose!
- **Boaters:** avoid disturbing heavily vegetated areas by not motoring through them. CLEAN: Carefully inspect and remove any visible aquatic plants/fragments from your boat and trailer before leaving the waterbody. DRAIN: Allow water to drain from livewells, bilge tanks, and dispose of water from all tanks that hold lake/stream water, including coolers, before launching at your next site. DRY: Allow the craft and equipment to dry completely before the next use.
- **Float planes:** Before entering the aircraft remove visible plants and pump water from floats. Before takeoff don't taxi through heavy plant growth; raise and lower rudders. After takeoff raise and lower rudders to free plant fragments while over the waters you are leaving or over land.
- **We need you on the lookout this summer! Report sightings:** Note location (GPS or mark on map) and water depth/clarity. Take a specimen (photo at a minimum). Take as much of the entire plant as you can, including the tiny flower on a long thin stalk if present. Put the sample in a zip lock bag, book, or wax paper and store in a cool place. Call the Alaska Department of Fish and Game invasive species hotline: 1-877-INVASIV. It's critically important to figure out where *Elodea* is—and where it isn't—so we can help prevent it from spreading further.
- **Educate yourself and others about invasive species:** Learn about your local aquatic habitats and the organisms they support. Learn about invasive species that threaten your local areas and share information with others.

