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[Help needed for plant removal](#)

Staff Report

Today marks the start of water chestnut-eradication efforts on two area water bodies.

Water chestnuts, an invasive species, were found last year in Goodyear Lake and in an Oneonta wetland off of state Route 205.

The Otsego County Conservation Association, in partnership with the State University College at Oneonta Biological Field Station, and the Goodyear Lake Association are seeking volunteers to help remove the plants.

"The water chestnut has a stem which extends to the surface of the water and ends in a rosette of floating, saw-toothed leaves," field station assistant director Matt Albright said. "The plant bears a spiky fruit, which can pierce tennis shoes and thick-soled boots."

In addition, water chestnuts can clog pipes, canals and waterways and adversely affect the environment by removing oxygen from the water and out competing native vegetation, Albright said.

The Goodyear Lake effort begins today and continues Friday and Saturday. Anyone wishing to volunteer may call Bruce Shultis at 432-8698.

"We hope to pull everything in sight," said Shultis, president of the Goodyear Lake Association. "We had the surface pretty well cleared last year, but because of the lateness of the effort, they came back pretty strong this year."

Shultis said hand-pulling is the best way to remove the plant and that, because of the early harvesting, spikes will not yet have formed on the water chestnut, making manual harvesting easier.

Volunteers should meet at the state Route 28 pull-off in Portlandville, just south of Blue Bonnet Antiques, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Assistance is also needed on the Oneonta wetland July 31 beginning at 9 a.m. Anyone interested in volunteering should call 547-8778 and leave contact information at the field station. The station is coordinating meeting points for volunteers, who will hand-pull plants from non-motorized boats.

Those able to bring canoes or john boats are invited to do so. Volunteers should also bring gloves, sunscreen, insect repellent and drinking water and wear clothes they do not mind getting wet, organizers said.

The eradication on the Oneonta wetland is a follow-up to an earlier application of the herbicide 2,4-D on roughly 10 acres of the affected area. Personnel from the state Department of Environmental Conservation oversaw application. According to the website of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, there appears to be no risk to humans entering the affected area after 24 hours of application of 2,4-D.

According to field station personnel, removal of the water chestnut from this area is particularly critical since water chestnuts could gain access to the entire Susquehanna Drainage Basin, which ultimately reaches the Chesapeake Bay.