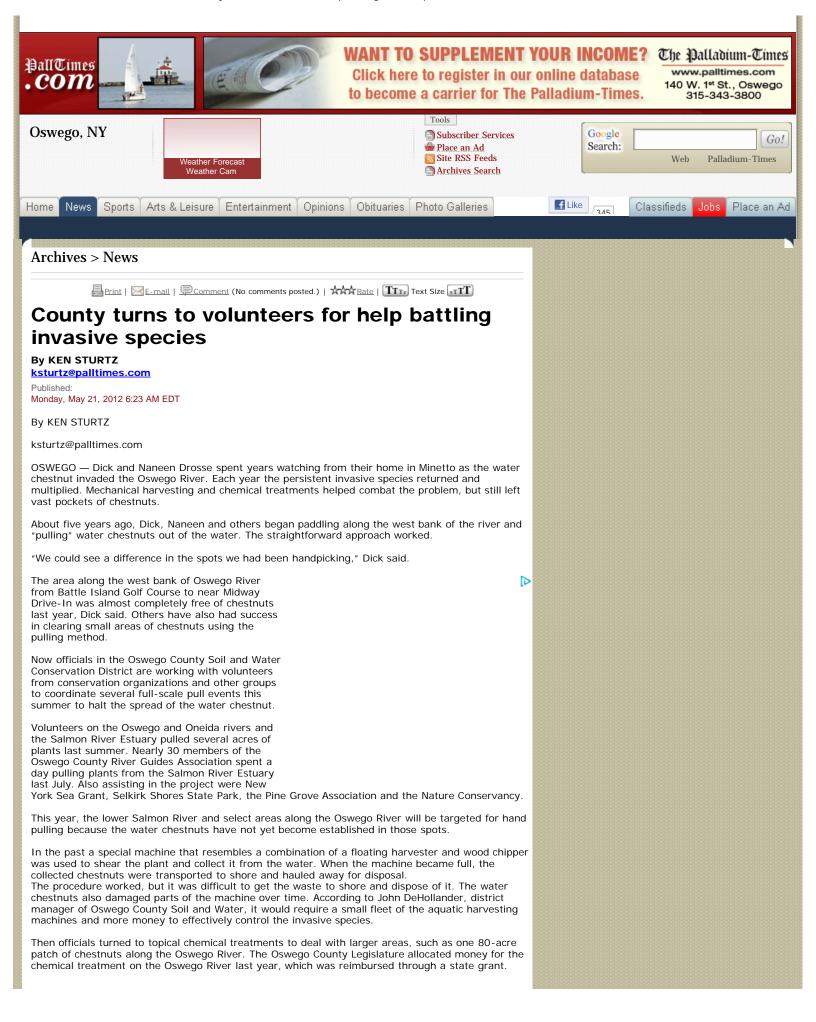
The Palladium-Times > Archives > News > County turns to volunteers for help battling invasive species



"Mixed results appeared during post-treatment," DeHollander said. "Further sampling last fall showed that some areas still had a high percentage of viable nuts for growth in the next season, while other areas are showing promise of reductions."

Each water chestnut plant can produce as many as 300 nuts per year. They also can remain dormant for years before reappearing.

A contractor has been hired for this summer to treat about 200 acres of the Oswego River from Minetto to Ox Creek, but even with the chemical treatments the chestnut problem will likely persist. Harvesting and chemicals still leave many chestnuts in shallow areas untouched, DeHollander said.

The plant, which occupies most of the waterways in Oswego County, can create large floating mats of vegetation restricting the penetration of sunlight, limiting the growth of native plants and disrupting the food web.

"It is difficult to slow the spread of water chestnut once it becomes established in a shallow water area," DeHollander said.

The plant has been established in some sections of Oswego River for decades, he said. It also has been found in the Salmon and Oneida rivers.

In addition to hurting fish and other wildlife, the plant can prevent fishermen and boaters from using parts of waterways that were once navigable.

Pulling chestnuts is the least expensive and most effective method of dealing with the plant in small areas. Volunteers are expected to pull several acres of chestnuts this summer, DeHollander said.

Water chestnuts plague virtually every major waterway in New York state, but several communities have been successful in eradicating or at least reducing the water chestnut population over the course of several years.

"The average person doesn't realize it isn't a one-, two- or three-year solution, Dick Drosse said. "It has to be long term."

Although the pulling efforts on the Salmon and Oswego rivers will be essential to maintaining the gains made long term, DeHollander said the events will be as much about creating awareness and educating the public of the issue because it is unlikely the plant would completely disappear soon.

"We may have to learn to live with it," he said.

For more information or to sign up for the pull at Port Ontario or the Oswego River, contact the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District at 592-9663.

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