

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 8, 2013

**SCHUMER LAUNCHES PLAN FOR FIRST-EVER  
RAPID RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM TO COMBAT  
AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES BEFORE THEY  
SPREAD – UNWELCOME PLANTS & ANIMALS ARE  
WREAKING HAVOC ON UPSTATE WATERWAYS,  
RECREATION, BOATING & TOURISM**

*No Rapid Response Framework Exists to Eradicate  
Invasive Species in Upstate Waterways, Allowing Them to  
Take Root And Cause Millions In Damage – Schumer Plan  
Would Allow Locals To Apply for Grants from the Dept. of  
the Interior Upon Discovery Of Threat*

*Hydrilla, Eurasian Milfoil, Asian Clam & Dozens of Others  
Have Stranglehold on Many Upstate NY Waterways,  
Putting Countless Other Rivers and Lakes at Risk*

*Schumer: Over 1,940 Businesses & 15,200 Jobs In Upstate  
Tourism, Shipping, Fishing and Related Industries Could  
Be Impacted*

Today, on a conference call with reporters, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer launched a plan to create the first-ever early detection and rapid response (EDRR) grant program to quickly combat aquatic invasive species once they reach new waterways. Such plants and animals as Eurasian milfoil, Asian clam and Hydrilla have already caused serious damage in Upstate New York waterways, and continue to threaten the shipping, fishing and recreation industries in the region if they spread. Specifically, Schumer revealed his new legislation would create a national response framework to allow states and local authorities to petition the Department of the Interior (DOI) for grants as soon as they identify a threat from invasive species, which would mobilize federal, local and state resources to help detect new invasive species early and to respond to and contain them rapidly, through efforts like spreading pesticides in localized areas.

“Currently, there are only rapid response resources for agricultural invasive species, not those that attack waterways, and we need to change that ASAP,” said **Schumer**. “For countless Upstate communities, rivers, lakes and waterways are the very lifeblood of the regional economy and central to their way of life: more must be done to respond to the myriad invasive species threats they now face.”

There are already extremely destructive invasive species in the Great Lakes, Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks and our rivers, but Schumer noted that many waterways are thus far

uninhabited. For example, in the Adirondacks two-thirds of our waterways are still free of invasives. However, Schumer warned how quickly that can change, with the recent discovery of Hydrilla in the Erie Canal and in the Cayuga Lake inlet that can also threaten the Great Lakes. According to the Anderson Economic Group's 2012 study called "The Costs of Aquatic Invasive Species to Great Lake States," New York has 11,770 tourist sites along the Great Lakes Watershed, with an annual economic impact of over \$2.8 billion. In addition, Schumer noted that communities on the Great Lakes are home to over 15,200 jobs and over 1,900 businesses in tourism, shipping and commercial fishing industries. Schumer noted that early detection and rapid response (EDRR) efforts increase the likelihood that invasions will be halted and eradicated. Once a species becomes widely established, full eradication is more difficult and costly.

**Schumer continued**, "Tourism, recreation, commercial fishing and boating are integral to our Upstate New York businesses and keep tens of thousands of locals on the job, but invasive species are a growing threat that could choke off that resource. When it comes to protecting our industries that depend on clear waterways from these invasive species, the watchword is preparedness. That's why I'm pushing legislation that would create a first-ever rapid response framework that would get federal resources to states as soon as these unwelcome plants and animals are identified, and before they get out of control. We should attack these species when they are easily and cheaply eradicated, and well before they have a significant impact on the economy."

Under Schumer's plan, states could petition the Department of Interior which is a co-chair of the National Invasive Species Council for a grant and technical assistance as soon as they identify a threat from invasive species. Currently, there are no federal resources for rapid response to aquatic invasive species. Schumer's bill would create a national response framework to mobilize resources from multiple agencies who would work with local counterparts to quickly combat the threat of aquatic invasive species. Because these species are not constrained by state lines and can spread rapidly, the need for a cooperative, multi-agency approach at the national level is clear. If a waterway is found eligible, resources could be made available within months rather than years.

*Early Detection* can be achieved by "active detection networks" comprised of individuals that have a specific job responsibility to find invasive species. They typically focus on species of concern, high-risk pathways, and locations. *Rapid Response* efforts contain, and where possible, eradicate invasive populations. Because response efforts are localized, they are often led by state and local governments. Federal funding is made available to respond to invasive species that harm agriculture or agricultural

lands, and Schumer's plan would create this federal rapid response resource for waterways.

On the call, Schumer provided a county by county report of the number of businesses and jobs in the shipping, boating and water-related tourism industry that could be damaged if more focus isn't given to aquatic invasive species. Schumer also broke down the counties in which the most damaging aquatic invasive species already exist. For example, in Erie County in Western New York—where Hydrilla, the Asian Clam, and the Zebra Mussel threaten local ecosystems—485 businesses employ over 5,000 people in jobs tied to fishing, shipping, and tourism. In Monroe County in the Rochester-Finger Lakes, where the Zebra and Quagga Mussel are intruding, 377 businesses employ over 2,600 people in the same industries. Overall, close to 7,000 jobs in Western New York, over 3,100 jobs in the Finger Lakes, over 1,400 jobs in the North County and over 1,100 jobs in Central New York depend on water-related industries threatened by these invasive species.

According to the Anderson Economic Groups study, there are already serious costs to sport and commercial fishing, tourism and recreation industries as a result of existing aquatic invasive species, which would only grow if these aren't contained. For example, commercial fishers must purchase insurance and herbicide, must hire new workers to perform control and maintenance operations and have increased energy costs. Fishers also see decreases in productivity and demand, because of marina closures due to unnavigable waters, sport fishing draws a smaller crowd, and there is decreased fish stock. The tourism and recreation industry has already been negatively impacted due to costs for removing algae from beaches, purchasing herbicide and removing plants and other species from boats and docks, and a reduced demand and decreased productivity because fewer visitors come to scenery and water ruined by aquatic invasives. Land and property value is also decreased when invasive species are present.

Schumer's legislation is focused only on early detection and containment, and is one piece of his larger effort to combat invasive species in Upstate New York. For those water bodies that are already fighting invasive species, like Chautauqua Lake with Eurasian milfoil, Schumer will continue to fight to help eradicate existing inhabitations. In that particular instance, Schumer supported Chautauqua County officials in their pursuit of over \$120,000 and urged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to collaborate closely with Chautauqua County officials as they map out the most productive and effective use of project funding in their

continued effort to fight against the Eurasian milfoil that has infested Chautauqua Lake.

Schumer highlighted Lake George in Warren County, as an example of a water body that would benefit greatly from this early detection rapid response grant program, even given that it is currently inhabited by invasive species and has eradicated others. According to the *Lake George Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan*, put out for public review in May 2013, the following are some examples of invasives that remain a threat for introduction or reintroduction to Lake George:

- Quagga mussel, current location Mohawk River and Great Lakes, could be transported through hull fouling, ballast, bait buckets
- Hydrilla, current location in Cayuga Inlet & Erie Canal, could be transported through trailered boats
- European Frog-bit, current location Lake Champlain and Champlain Canal, could be transported through trailered boats or dumped.

Both animal and plant aquatic invasive species can cause serious damage to upstate watersheds. Hydrilla, for example, is a fast-growing aquatic weed that can reach up to the water surface. It seriously disrupts both recreational and commercial boating, as well as swimming and fishing. In 2011, Hydrilla was discovered in the Cayuga Lake inlet, where local authorities including the City of Ithaca spent over \$100,000 trying to eradicate the infestation before it could spread to the entire lake or to other parts of the Finger Lakes. Thus far, Hydrilla has not spread beyond the Cayuga Inlet, but the efforts are ongoing and will require significant funding for years and years to come. While locals are doing an excellent job combatting Hydrilla, it took an extended period of time for the City of Ithaca to access that funding, and an EDRR grant program could have mobilized resources more quickly. The Zebra Mussel, which can now be found prominently in the Finger Lakes and throughout New York, can damage harbors, waterways, ships, boats, water treatment plants and power facilities. By clinging to underwater pipes, the Zebra Mussel clogs intake pipes and forces water treatment plants and power plants to pay a steep cost for maintenance and repair.

###