

## **The Conesus Lake Watercraft Steward Program, Our First Line of Defense!**



This summer Conesus Lake enjoyed a well run and very successful Watercraft Steward program. This program (and our Stewards) demonstrated time and time again that educating boaters about the dangers of Aquatic Invasive Species and training them on the use of CLEAN/DRAIN/DRY is the most effective deterrent in stopping the next aquatic invader! Here is a summary of some of the successes enjoyed by the Watercraft Steward program:

- 3866 boats were inspected
- As many as 9600 boaters were directly or tangentially engaged and informed (2.5 avg./boat)
- 1012 boats (26%) came from other lakes, most without watercraft steward programs and many with aquatic invasive species that we do not have and do not want!
- 73 boats, launching from other lakes, contained and were cleaned of organic organisms prior to launch. Fortunately none contained new aquatic invasives. These contaminated boats represent 12% of all launches from other lakes. This contaminated percentage was as high as 21% later in the year as weed growth increased in all lakes.
- By the end of the year 80% of boaters reported having prior contact with our Stewards
- 24% of all first contacts (190 of 784) took additional information on aquatic invasives and C/D/D.

Despite these successes, we recognize that there may have been as many as 2000 additional inspections could have occurred with additional funding and staffing. It was also interesting to note that lakes that had stewards in 2013 but not 2014 showed a significant increase in boats arriving with contaminants, reinforcing the need for our own first line of defense. Given the lack of grant funding in 2014, only 3 of 11 Finger Lakes operated Watercraft Steward Programs.

**This program would not have been possible without your generous donations to the CLA** and without the additional funding and/or operational support of the following agencies: Conesus Lake Watershed Council, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SUNY Geneseo and the Livingston County Workforce Development program. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!!**