



SEE IT, PULL IT!

Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program

Interim Report
December 12, 2024

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Water soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*) is an invasive perennial aquatic plant that is native to Europe and Northwest Asia. Due to its invasive nature, water soldier can negatively impact native aquatic plant biodiversity by creating large dense stands of floating or rooted vegetation and outcompeting native plants for resources. As a result, water soldier is prohibited under the Invasive Species Act, 2015 (ISA); therefore, it is illegal to import, possess, deposit, release, transport, breed/grow, buy, sell, lease, or trade water soldier in Ontario. It was first detected in the wild in North America in 2008 in the hamlet of Trent River, Ontario. Since its initial detection in 2008, water soldier has spread downstream through the Trent- Severn Waterway (TSW) and has also been detected in other locations throughout the province (e.g., Bay of Quinte).

The proposed **See It, Pull It** campaign is a crucial step forward in educating/engaging the public about this species and the negative impacts that it can have on their ability to enjoy their local waterbodies if left unchecked. With funding from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation, the OFAH will provide communities with the training, tools, and on-the-ground support needed to protect their own waterfronts by reporting and removing water soldier.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

This project is progressing as planned, however the project timeline has adjusted. Achievements to date are summarized below.

1. Develop volunteer handbook and affiliated content

Program staff worked with the Water Soldier Working Group to finalize the See It, Pull It! Volunteer video that was created by Parks Canada. This video will then be used to develop the volunteer handbook that will be promoted and distributed in the Spring and Summer of 2025.

Program staff also updated and printed additional copies of the water soldier post card that was then delivered to local marina's and businesses around Lake Simcoe and the Bay of Quinte area.

2. Develop media campaign

Program staff developed and shared a social media campaign across the ISAP and OFAH social media accounts to increase awareness of water soldier. To date, a total of 10 posts have made 169,511 impressions, reaching 109,811, and engaging with 8,259. Additional posts will be shared in 2025.

3. Installation of signage

Program staff updated and printed additional water soldier signage to be distributed and installed around high-risk locations in Ontario. In the Spring of 2025, staff will be prioritizing areas around Lake Simcoe for the initial installations.

4. See It, Pull It training day

Program staff will be planning a See It, Pull It! Training day for the Spring of 2025 to accompany the training video and volunteer handbook.

5. Build water soldier removal toolkits for volunteers

Program staff will be creating the water soldier removal toolkits for the Spring of 2025 to be promoted at training day(s).

6. Track reporting/removal activities resulting from the See It, Pull It campaign

Program staff continue to track social media analytics and removal activities completed by partners through the summer of 2024. Final results will be shared after the Summer of 2025 with volunteer input.

PROJECT BUDGET

Expenditure	Project Total	Requested from OWF	Spent to date
Human Resources	\$10,430.00	\$0.00	\$5,148.00
Training/Educational Resources	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00
Media Campaign	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$782.48
Training Day	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$250.00
Water Soldier Toolkits	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Administration	\$575.00	\$575.00	\$575.00
Total	\$16,755.00	\$6,325.00	\$10,005.48