

Hydrilla in Mill Creek signals recovery not crisis requiring navigation-focused response

Hydrilla's rapid spread in Mill Creek reflects improving water quality — not an ecological emergency. Maryland law protects it as SAV, so eradication is neither legal nor advisable; the community's realistic goal is keeping navigation lanes open.

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

20-foot strips - no permit required for navigation

- **Notification is required**
 - Under **NR §4-213**, waterfront owners may trim SAV in a **20-ft swath** from dock to navigable channel without DNR approval.
 - Only **mechanical cutting or hand-pulling** are permitted under 4-213 — herbicides, diver suction, and benthic barriers are explicitly prohibited.
 - **Mid-summer trimming** before seed set is ideal; all cut material must be bagged, removed from water, and composted upland on owner property.
- Work beyond 20-ft strips requires a **Joint Permit Application** through MDE, with federal review and a permitting timeline of three to nine months.

357 SASSAFRAS ACRES MAPPED — GOAL IS 1,168

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Why Hydrilla Is Protected

- Hydrilla is classified as **protected SAV** statewide — DNR policy prohibits removal beyond the 20-ft navigation strip in Bay tributaries.
- It provides **habitat, sediment stabilization, nutrient uptake, and oxygen production**, substituting for absent native species while water quality recovers.

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Seasonal Outlook

- Hydrilla will **naturally senesce this fall** as temperatures drop — no odor expected; senesced material incorporates into sediment as carbon sequestration.
- Return next spring is **likely but not certain**; density depends on water clarity, salinity, and precipitation — impossible to predict precisely.

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Path to Native Recovery

- Hydrilla acts as a **transitional surrogate** — improving water clarity and sediment conditions that allow native SAV species to re-establish over time.
- Salinity fluctuations **naturally limit Hydrilla** in tidal waters; complete eradication is neither allowable nor necessary for ecological balance.

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Community Responsibilities

- **No state funds or DNR labor** are available for SAV removal — all navigation-clearing work is the community's or individual owner's responsibility.
- Before any trimming, complete the **DNR Google Form** with location and date; contact Brooke Landry (DNR) or Zack Kelleher (ShoreRivers) for guidance.

Notify Brooke Landry at DNR via the Google Form, then schedule mid-summer hand-cutting of your 20-ft navigation strips and disperse native species seeds to accelerate long-term recovery.