RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - It's a plant called hydrilla, and state parks officials and NC State researchers say it is infesting parts of the Eno River in the Triangle area and it must be stopped.

The state Division of Parks and Recreation says research shows it is spreading down river at the rate of up to one mile each year. It appears to be concentrated at the east end of the park in Durham County. A multi-agency task forces hopes to initiate containment efforts in 2015 and to fend off the potential for hydrilla to reach Falls Lake in 12 years.

A broad public education effort hopes to identify the best methods of treatment for the river within Eno River State Park, according to the state agency. Those may be chemical treatment, removal of the plant by hand, introduction of grass carp, which feed on hydrilla, or a combination of those methods.

Hydrilla is a submersed aquatic plant that can create nearly impenetrable mats of stems and leaves on the surface of lakes, rivers and other waterways. An invasive species from Asia, hydrilla impedes recreational use of waterways, crowds out native vegetation and can ultimately harm fish and other aquatic species. The plant can also clog intakes where rivers or reservoirs are used for drinking water supplies and irrigation.

The task force involves partners from the N.C. Division of Water Resources as well as other state and federal agencies, Durham and Orange counties, and the city of Durham and town of Hillsborough.

The hydrilla at Eno River State Park likely came from fragments that floated down from an upstream reservoir or was carried on boat trailers or bait buckets.