

Eagle Lake Properties Owners, Inc.



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June 26, 2000

The Honorable John E. Sweeney, Congressman
US House of Representatives
Room 437 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3222
Attention - Mr. John Boling Jr.

Dear Congressman Sweeney,

It is our understanding that you are interested in finding ways to help lakes in New York deal with critical environmental problems like those caused by invasive aquatic plants. I would like to applaud your efforts and briefly describe to you the efforts we have put forth to resolve a Eurasian watermilfoil problem on Eagle Lake. It is our hope that we can enlist your support in our efforts to control this nonnative nuisance aquatic plant.

One potential source of federal assistance for problems such as these is the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program, Section 206, administered by the Army Corps of Engineers. We would be very interested in working with you to see if a Section 206 project for Eagle Lake could be authorized in the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) of 2000.

Eagle Lake is a 420 acre lake, located in the towns of Ticonderoga and Crown Point in the southern portion of Essex County, New York. It is located on Rt. 74 between Interstate 87 (the Northway) and the Town of Ticonderoga. The public has access to the lake through a NY State DEC maintained, but unmanned boat launch and through an unattended NYS DEC public day use beach/ campground. In addition to the public users, there are approximately 10 families that enjoy year round homes here, and some 60 seasonal users that come from all over the country to enjoy the beauty of Eagle Lake. As early as 1907 Eagle Lake property owners decided to come together as a group in order to provide a means to "protect the mutual interests of its property owners and to maintain the environmental and recreational quality of Eagle Lake." This group, known then as the Eagle Lake Property Owners Association, is still in existence today as the Eagle Lake Properties Owners Inc. (ELPOI). The ELPOI continues doing what the original owners had the foresight to set in motion.

Eurasian watermilfoil was tentatively identified in Eagle Lake in 1982. Confirmation of its presence was made in 1987. Ken Wagner, in the 1999 draft of the Eagle Lake Supplemental Environmental Impact Study (SEIS), states "this plant was found at locally excessive levels in a 1989 survey and has expanded throughout the littoral zone of the lake to the present time." The SEIS was prepared as part of ELPOI's efforts, working with the NYS DEC, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and the NYS Department of State (DOS), to develop a control plan to eradicate or reduce the harm being done by the milfoil. The SEIS details all the methods that are available to complete this control process as they specifically relate to Eagle Lake. Of all the choices that are mentioned application of the herbicide Sonar (with fluridone as the active ingredient) is stated as being the appropriate choice for the advanced infestation state of this lake. At present between 1/4 and 1/3 of the lake bottom has actively growing milfoil plants. Many of the plant beds have been in existence long enough to produce growth that reaches from depths of up to 20 feet, all the way to the surface, where they then form dense floating island masses. Several of these "islands" are large enough to warrant the placement of buoy markers to alert recreational lake users to these lake surface hazards in hopes of preventing entanglement by both water craft and swimmers/water skiers alike.

The ELPOI has completed several studies over the past 10 years to document milfoil's spread and the impact it is having on the lake environment and the economic health of the area. (The ELPOI strives to keep its membership and neighboring lake associations informed of its findings through its annual newsletter and ongoing educational efforts.) At its present rate of spread, the milfoil is quickly approaching a critical stage. If allowed to continue it will only be a matter of time before the rich bio diversity that still remains will be lost, making restoration that much more difficult and expensive.

In the past few months John Kelly (Special Assistant to the Commissioner of the DEC) has joined Jim Sutherland (Research Biologist for the DEC) and many others in the ongoing search for funding to complete a Pilot Project, started 6 years ago, for the control of milfoil on Eagle Lake. This project was started to show the effectiveness of Sonar in a whole lake treatment for the control of milfoil. At this point the major stumbling block is funding. The funds necessary to implement a restoration project on Eagle Lake are about \$110,000. Over the past few years the ELPOI has had many members pledge their own money towards the project and has been able to secure several small grants to complete much of the preliminary work required by this type of project. It was just learned that Senator Stafford, who has supported the ELPOI's efforts for several years now, has just granted the ELPOI \$25,000 for use on this project. The ELPOI has also been in contact with Mr. Charles McCaffery and others at the DOS, the Army Corps of Engineers and many others to seek their help with funding. Many of these people want to help but find that the funding they have available to them is not appropriate for our intended use towards implementation of a control method.

In a brief conversation that I had with you several years ago, when you stopped by the Chilson Volunteer Fire Department's Annual Barbecue during your pre-election campaign, you expressed a great concern for the environment and our trouble with milfoil in Eagle Lake. We hope that as you work on WRDA 2000 that you find a way to authorize a project for Eagle Lake. I would like to discuss this process with you soon and look forward to hearing from you as to what efforts we might undertake together to restore this lake to its pre-milfoil beauty for future generations to enjoy and to prevent the spread of this weed to other lakes.

Respectfully,

Rolf Tiedemann
President, Board Chairperson
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