

**EDITORIAL**

## EDITORIAL: Time to step up milfoil fight



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The first misconception you have to discard when discussing invasive species is that any of the state's lakes and forests, even those in the most inaccessible areas of the Adirondack Park, are wild and pristine, and should not be managed by human beings.

All the lakes and forests in the state have been affected by human activity and one proof of this is the widespread presence of invasive species.

Whether through global warming, fishing and camping, the use of fertilizers or lakeside septic systems, human activity is most often to blame for the introduction of new, destructive species to the Adirondack region.

It's natural for species to move into new areas, to drive out native species and to proliferate if they can, but we should, nonetheless, fight to limit the destruction they cause.

Hurricanes and floods are natural, too, but we naturally do everything we can to protect our communities from their ravages.

As with hurricanes and floods, the invasion of destructive species needs to be fought in an intelligent and comprehensive fashion, using every tool we have, but making sure the prevention isn't worse than the problem.

The town of Chester is seeking permission from the Adirondack Park Agency to become the second Adirondack community to use an herbicide to kill Eurasian milfoil.

Chester is seeking permits from the APA and the state Department of Environmental Conservation for permits to use Renovate OTF, which contains the chemical triclopyr, in a section of Loon Lake that has been choked with milfoil in recent summers.

Officials in Ticonderoga, too, are applying to use triclopyr in Eagle Lake.

We support the use of triclopyr in the Adirondacks where milfoil growth is heavy and has curtailed use of a lake.

Neither triclopyr nor any herbicide should be used widely and indiscriminately, however, even though the federal Environmental Protection Agency has found it "practically nontoxic" to human and animal populations when diluted in water.

Other methods of attacking milfoil do not introduce toxins into the environment, but have their own drawbacks.

Hand-harvesting, for example, is expensive and time-consuming, as is the use of mats to kill

Asian clams.

The goal of all these efforts should be control, not elimination of the targeted species. We want to stop Asian clams from fouling beaches and clogging water pipe intakes in Lake George, but we do not need to confirm every Asian clam in the lake is dead.

It's unrealistic to pretend we have the money, time or expertise to rid the Adirondack region of invasive species. You might as well set a goal of preventing floods.

The best we can do is limit the damage, and that should be our goal, using every technique at our disposal.

With that said, preventative steps are just as important in the invasive species fight as methods of killing such as hand-harvesting, matting and application of chemicals.

This year, the state adopted a ban, with certain exceptions, on the use of phosphorous lawn fertilizers, which add nutrients to water and promote growth of plants like milfoil and algae.

The town of Queensbury has adopted an even stricter law, banning the use of any fertilizer within 50 feet of the Lake George shore, and of any phosphorous fertilizer within 200 feet of the shore.

The town and village of Lake George have adopted laws banning phosphorous fertilizer anywhere within their borders.

The state Legislature has passed a ban on the sale and possession of any invasive species within the state, and Warren County is moving to require inspections of boats being launched on waterbodies anywhere in the county.

The APA has proposed an expedited permit process for invasive species control through matting and hand-harvesting.

So recognition of the destructiveness of invasive species is widespread, although the response statewide has yet to match the magnitude of the problem.

From feral hogs to spiny water fleas, a horde of non-native species is stampeding into New York, and we need a statewide, state-led and state-funded response.

Meanwhile, counties and towns and private organizations are fighting haphazard although sometimes effective battles. If the state isn't going to take over this fight, it should at least do everything it can to help local civic and environmental leaders who are waging it.

*Local editorials represent the opinion of The Post-Star editorial board, which consists of Publisher Rick Emanuel, Editor Ken Tingley, Projects Editor Will Doolittle and citizen representative Robert Sledd.*