

# BATTLE OVER USE OF HERBICIDE VS. MILFOIL ON LAKE GEORGE

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By Zander Frost, Chronicle Staff Writer

The proposed introduction of ProcellaCOR EC, an herbicide to treat the Eurasian Watermilfoil invasive species on Lake George, has split organizations around the lake.

Glen Lake already uses the chemical and says it is safe and effective. The Lake George Association is strongly opposed to its use in Lake George.

Last week, the Adirondack Park Agency twice voted 6-4 to allow the Lake George Park Commission to begin testing the chemical in Blair's Bay in Hague and Sheep Meadow Bay near Huletts Landing, Adirondack Explorer reported.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has okayed its use too.

Now it awaits expected approval from the Park Commission Board.

Joe Thouin, LGPC Environmental Analyst, believes Procella-COR EC is safe. "As the New York State agency charged with protecting the water quality of Lake George and its resources, if it didn't have strong safety product profile, it would be a non starter," he told The Chronicle.

"If there was any concern for drinking water, that's obviously a non starter."

## **LGA: Far too many unknowns**

But the LGA urged its members to write letters opposing the chemical's use.

The LGA said, in part, it could have "negative impacts to human health," that there's a lack of data regarding its interaction with organisms on Lake George, and that the chemical could spread further than just the proposed testing sites.

One APA board member who voted against the chemical's use cited the lack of a follow-up study of its effects.

Mr. Thouin said the objections are sincere. "It's folks that are concerned about the lake... Some of the questions we've seen from the public are some of the same questions that we've asked."

His reasons for believing in the chemical include its approvals by the Environmental Protection Agency and DEC, and the experiences of lakes including Saratoga Lake, Minerva Lake and Glen Lake.

### **Glen Lake: ProcellaCOR worked!**

Paul Derby, who served as President of the Glen Lake Association from 2000 to 2018 and now chairs its environmental committee, gives ProcellaCOR EC rave reviews. Glen Lake introduced it in 2020.

“The water quality is improved. The recreational value has improved, the property values have improved significantly,” he said. “We haven’t seen any interference with our fish population, which are very good on Glen Lake.”

“We actually had an increase in the number of desired vegetation,” he added.

Both Mr. Thouin and Mr. Derby said a positive of ProcellaCOR is that it doesn’t need to be applied year after year; its milfoil reduction effects linger.

Eurasian Watermilfoil is often removed manually through “diver-assisted suction harvesting.”

The LGA said the Park Commission’s hand harvesting program is working. “The Commission itself has said will soon make milfoil ‘a thing of the past,’ a clear acknowledgement of the program’s importance and success,” the LGA wrote.

### **Limits of hand-harvesting**

Mr. Thouin said hand-harvesting will continue regardless of the chemical’s use, but that it’s costly and inefficient. “\$8,700 per week, and that is for one diver under the water,” he said.

He said there are myriad factors at play, but a “rough cost comparison” for diver-assisted would be \$15,000-\$20,000 per acre. For ProcellaCOR, it’s \$1,000-\$5,000 per acre.

The Chronicle asked if it’s hard to find divers for the job. “It is, yes. There’s only a few companies that do,” he said. “It’s labor intensive, and has specialized equipment, and that comes with a cost.”

He added, “We’ve enjoyed an increase in funding in recent years, and again this year in the EPF, which we’re sincerely appreciative for, but these are not levels that will be sustainable long term as far as funding.”

Is the milfoil problem getting worse?

“The last few years, we’ve been lucky to have increased funding, and we’ve put that toward a capital project to go after the dense beds and the moderately sized beds,” Mr. Thouin said.

“We haven’t seen an increase in Eurasian watermilfoil, per se. But after 30-some-odd years, we’re still working on some of the same sites that we started with.

“Unfortunately, although we’ve done a tremendous job of knocking back some of those big beds, and have certainly made progress, there seems to be room in the toolbox where we could use this in areas that are troublesome, and we can’t use physical means.”

### **Why milfoil’s a threat**

Why is containing Eurasian watermilfoil on Lake George a concern?

“Milfoil is a highly invasive species,” Mr. Thouin said. “And it displaces the native macrophytes, the native plants, and that can affect the entire ecosystem.”

“If left unmanaged, it is extremely dense and can top out in the water column; it comes right to the surface. That can have impacts on boating, on swimming, certainly on real property values.”

“It can have widespread and significant impacts, not only from an ecological and water quality perspective, but also on the things that run our local economy.”

“Lake George is a big part of our local and regional economy. And reduction in water quality, or reduction in real property value would be serious for this area.”

### **Her perspective on LG herbicide milfoil dispute**

By Ginger Henry Kuenzel

Editor’s note: Ginger Henry Kuenzel is a Hague resident, Lake George Association board member, former Hague Town Board member and former Lake George editor for The Chronicle. Here’s an updated article Ginger wrote for the digital Hague Chronicle about the current Lake George herbicide-milfoil fight.

The Lake George Park Commission (LGPC) applied for and was granted on April 14 a permit from the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to put the herbicide ProcellaCOR into Lake George at two pilot sites: Blair’s Bay in Glen Burnie and Sheep Meadow Bay in Hulett’s Landing. Although both sites are located on the east side of the lake, they are part of the Town of Hague, whose boundaries extend to the eastern shoreline.

The LGPC feels that this herbicide could be an effective way to combat Eurasian milfoil, an invasive species that has been in Lake George for decades.

Working with partners, including the Lake George Association (LGA), the LGPC has, for several years, used hand-harvesting to try to control the plant. It notes that nearly 68 tons of milfoil were removed from the lake using this method in 2021. Now the LGPC wants to test ProcellaCOR as an additional tool to manage this weed, noting that it's far more cost-effective than hand-harvesting. The LGPC plans to apply the herbicide at the two sites as a pilot in June of this year.

The LGA and Chris Navitsky, Lake George Waterkeeper, are strongly opposed to using this chemical, stating that "there simply is not enough science about the potential adverse impacts to water quality, human health, and aquatic plant and animal life to proceed at this time, particularly given the unique and complex character of the Lake."

They asked the APA to deny the current application until more peer-reviewed scientific data that is specific to Lake George can be collected. The product information label on the manufacturer's website describes ProcellaCOR as "a herbicide for management of freshwater aquatic vegetation in slow-moving/quiescent waters with little or no continuous outflow." This is not the profile of Lake George.

Some of the other concerns include how long the toxic chemical will remain in the lake, the fact that ProcellaCOR eventually breaks down into chemicals that are as toxic as the parent and the fear that decomposing milfoil could even increase the risk of harmful algal blooms.

At its April 12 meeting, the Hague Town Board considered the arguments before unanimously adopting a resolution stating its opposition to the application of ProcellaCOR in Lake George at this time. The public is also concerned. Of the 325 public comment letters received by the APA, 300 expressed opposition to the use of the toxic chemical in Lake George — more than 90 percent.

Some reminded the APA that thousands of people use Lake George for drinking water, and they feared the herbicide's potential adverse effects.

Many said they wanted additional scientific study about the effects this herbicide could have on plant and animal life in the lake. Some also pointed out that, for many years, DDT was considered safe — until scientific studies proved that it wasn't.

At its regular meeting on April 14, the APA Board listened to a staff presentation recommending approval of the LGPC's application before narrowly approving it by a vote of 6-4. One Board member noted that one of her reasons for voting against approval was the fact that Hague's Town Board was unanimously opposed to granting approval.

The LGPC held an informational session on April 15 for the public. Many participants wanted to know why it is so urgent to put this relatively new herbicide into the lake now rather than waiting for more research on how ProcellaCOR will specifically affect Lake George.

Since the LGPC's original decision to seek the APA permit, public opposition has become very clear, as evidenced by the public comments and the Hague Town Board's resolution. The LGPC still has the opportunity to take these factors into account before making a final decision on whether to move forward at its April 26 regular meeting.

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