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Park agency approves Lake Luzerne's plan to kill lake weeds with herbicide

May 12, 2023



The Adirondack Park Agency approved a permit application to use an aquatic herbicide on Lake Luzerne. Photo by Zachary Matson

Agency puts aside concerns of unknown consequences of dropping chemical in Adirondack lakes amid widespread interest

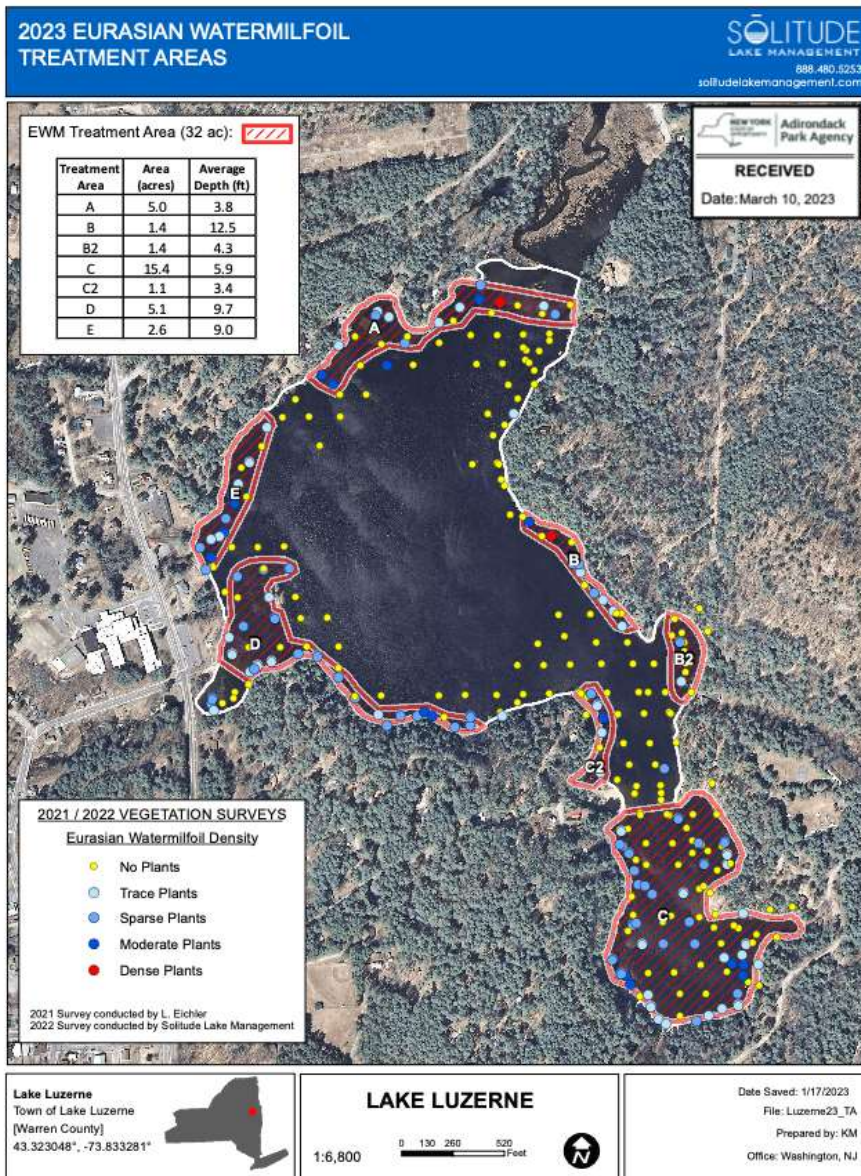
By Zachary Matson

Lake Luzerne can move forward with a plan to release a chemical herbicide in the town's namesake lake this spring to fight invasive Eurasian watermilfoil, the Adirondack Park Agency decided at its Thursday meeting.

The decision is a bellwether with widespread interest among communities and lake associations looking to add to their arsenal (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/herbicide-interest-grows>) against the Adirondack Park's most pervasive water weed.

The Town of Lake Luzerne, working with national environmental firm SOLitude Lake Management, can conduct its one-time application of the herbicide ProcellaCOR (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/procellacor-herbicide-explained>) between May 15 and June 30 this year or in 2024, according to the APA permit.

The southeastern Adirondack town plans to spread the herbicide to kill invasive milfoil on 32 acres of the lake's near shore waters, using around 10 gallons of the chemical in the effort. Invasive milfoil was first identified on the lake in 1989 and has posed a persistent and growing problem since.

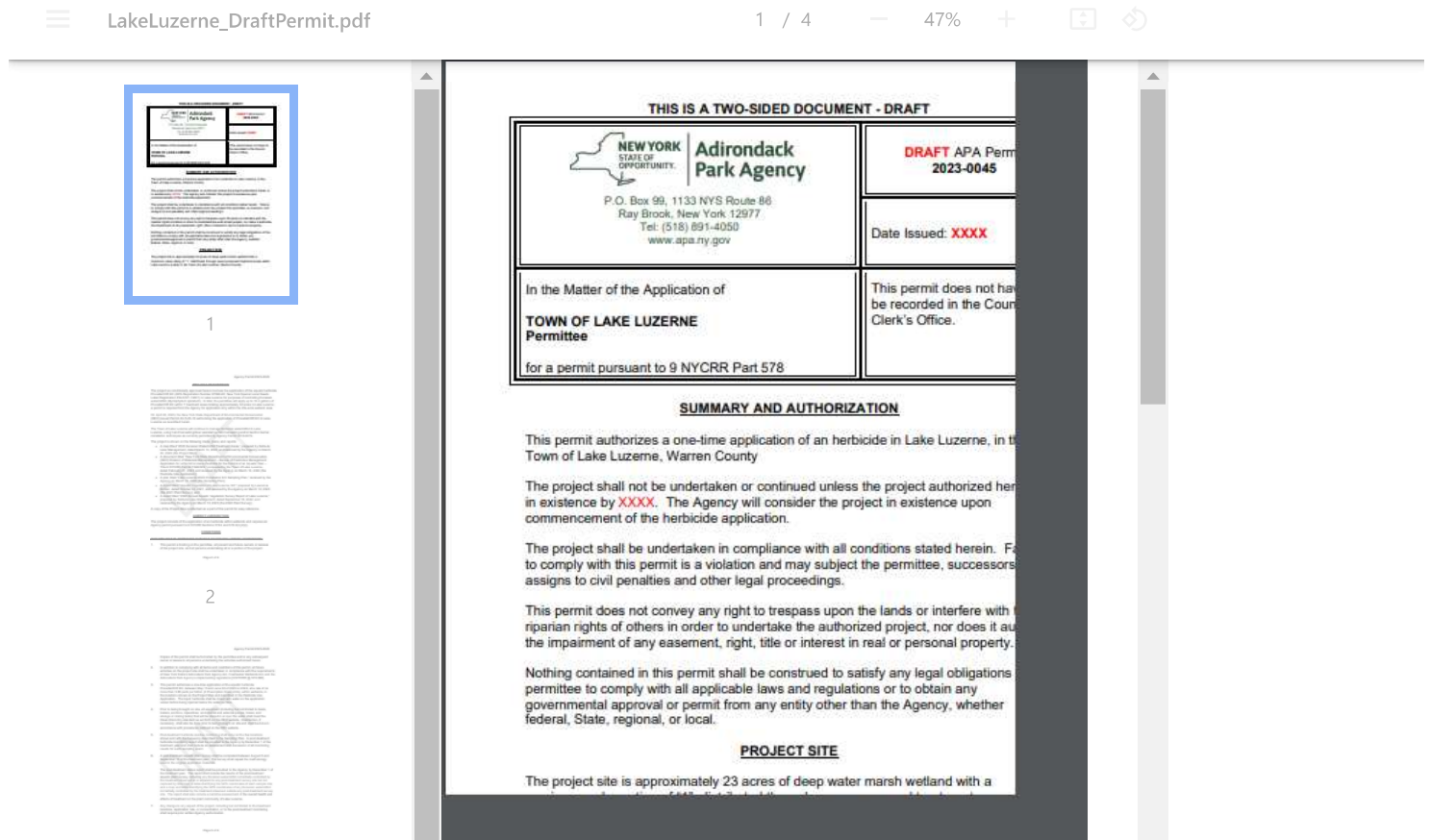


A screenshot of a map showing the planned ProcellaCOR EC use at Lake Luzerne. Town of Lake Luzerne APA application.

APA's jurisdiction extended to the 23 acres of deep water marsh included in the proposal. Parts of the wetland received the agency's highest and most restrictive rating, according to the draft permit.

While the rating does not allow any action that would impact the wetland, APA staff determined the herbicide's impacts are "intended to improve the quality and values associated with that high value wetland," APA counsel Chris Cooper said at the meeting.

The permit requires post-treatment monitoring for herbicide residue at five sites, as well as an aquatic plant survey later in the growing season. A report due to the APA by Dec. 1 also requires a "narrative assessment of the overall health and effects of treatment on the plant community of Lake Luzerne."



[LakeLuzerne_DraftPermit \(https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/LakeLuzerne_DraftPermit.pdf\)](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/LakeLuzerne_DraftPermit.pdf)

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During a presentation to the board, Aaron Ziemann, an APA project analyst, outlined the town's plan, the permit requirements, expected effects to native plants and concerns raised by the public.

Ziemann said that while the agency assumed the herbicide would negatively impact some native plants, including the threatened little milfoil, the plan would ultimately benefit restoration of native species in a healthy wetland ecosystem. He also acknowledged the limited long-term record since the herbicide has only been approved for use since 2018, but he noted positive results where it has been used.

"The data and reporting we do have including multi-year data at Minerva Lake indicates the product works as anticipated with no unanticipated non-target impacts observed," Ziemann said.

APA Commissioner Zoe Smith asked staff about the survey requirements and whether it was possible to ask for more detailed assessments of the lake's biology, beyond just plants, and to require multiple years of follow-up surveys. She was the sole commissioner to vote against the permit, calling for more discussion about how to support municipalities to carry out the detailed survey work in the future.

"So we can indeed say this is improving the wetland with confidence, that the conditions will benefit from this treatment versus allowing the milfoil to grow," Smith said.

Some commissioners also pressed staff for more examples of how untreated invasive milfoil harms native plants and wildlife, as well as the high costs on communities and lake associations that manage milfoil through hand harvesting methods.

Ziemann also compared ProcellaCOR to another herbicide that Lake Luzerne deployed in 2010 against invasive milfoil. The newer herbicide can be used at much smaller doses and dissipates from the water more quickly.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation approved ProcellaCOR a year after it garnered federal approval. It was first used in New York in 2019 at Snyder's Lake in North Greenbush. A year later, it debuted in the Adirondack Park at Minerva Lake. (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/herbicide-urasian-watermilfoil>) Soon after, applicators dropped the chemical in Glen Lake, Sunnyside Lake and other lakes near the park boundary.

Applicators spread an herbicide via airboat on Minerva Lake in June 2020. Photo by Gwendolyn Craig

Bob Bombard, a water specialist with the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District, recently reported that post-treatment surveys on Sunnyside Lake last year found no invasive milfoil on the lake a month and two months later.

During the past year, the [planned use of the same herbicide on Lake George](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-george-park-commission-tries-new-bid-for-milfoil-herbicide) (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-george-park-commission-tries-new-bid-for-milfoil-herbicide>) sparked a debate there and about its broader potential in the park. After a lawsuit, the APA's approval of the Lake George permit last year was vacated by a Warren County judge who rebuked the agency staff's presentation of the permit to commissioners, a decision the state is appealing.

Proponents of the herbicide say it has been proven safe and effective on scores of lakes in the Northeast. Skeptics warn the studies of its impacts are limited and the long-term effects are unknown.

A similar plan for Paradox Lake was recently up for public comment with DEC. The application indicates planned APA approval in May or June, enabling use by the end of June, but the APA may seek more information first..

The APA's consideration of herbicide permits has fueled calls for the agency to conduct its first adjudicatory hearing in over a decade. Those hearings collect evidence about the project and are the only way the APA can deny a permit. The Adirondack Council and Protect the Adirondacks have argued the agency should use the hearing process to gather more information about ProcellaCOR and its potential impacts before opening the gates to its widespread use in the park.

APA commissioners did not address the calls for an adjudicatory hearing at Thursday's meeting. The board approved the permit on a 9-1 vote.

Jim Niles, a Lake Luzerne town board member, said the town has a public hearing scheduled for Monday and still needs to finalize details with the contractor before scheduling an application date. He said he was pleased to see more APA commissioners vote for the Luzerne permit than had voted in support of the Lake George project.

"Because of the court ruling in Lake George, I didn't have any idea how the APA board would react," Niles said.

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About Zachary Matson

Zachary Matson has been an environmental reporter for the Explorer since October 2021. He is focused on the many issues impacting water and the people, plants and wildlife that rely on it in the Adirondack Park. Zach worked at daily newspapers in Missouri, Arizona and New York for nearly a decade, most recently working as the education reporter for six years at the Daily Gazette in Schenectady.

[View all posts by Zachary Matson](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/author/zmatson) (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/author/zmatson>)

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Comments

John says

May 12, 2023 at 11:09 am (<https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620521>)

So you all have decided to trade one disaster for another, where do you think all the dead decaying plant life goes, it sinks to the bottom of your lake and helps destroy the lake bottoms ecosystem, this seems to be the answer to all the state agencies, we have forever chemicals in the air, so why not poison our waters, I don't know about you but no matter how many studies they have done there isn't any in my eyes good for our planet

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Phil says

[May 12, 2023 at 1:52 pm \(https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620523\)](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620523)

The invasive plants eventually die off anyway, but it is hoped that they only die once and then are gone. This ProcellaCOR is highly selective and has minimal impact on native plants. We can now see how well it does in Lake Luzerne and learn from the results. This should prove ProcellaCOR's efficacy against Eurasian Milfoil. It is amazing that 3.86 parts per billion of anything can be so effective.

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Nathan says

[May 13, 2023 at 9:59 am \(https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620535\)](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620535)

The whole point of forever wild is it is to be the safest place for life to exist. That nature is as intended. A lifeboat that is safe for all plants, animals, insects the very natural world.... Not poisoned at a convenience, or a test bed for unknown long term consequences. APA again goes against the very mandate of protecting the Adirondack park and to use poison with the park with unknown long term consequences. In 10-20 years will we find out it causes cancer? kills insect life along rivers, streams? Gets concentrated in fish and cause cancer in people? wipes out trout in 20 years. What if it kills midge larvae in streams, then ripples to dragonflies starve, birds, fish?

Herbicide gets used time after time slowly building up in the ground water, animal fats.

We have already something as simple as salt being a problem in water used to de-ice roads. let's roll the dice on even worse things? A Long list of chemicals used and thought safe until decades later, DDT, PCB's, roundup, 2,4,D, Atrazine, Teflon and by-products, ect.

They persist for decades or much longer. DDT was the wonder bug killer, almost wiped out condors, eagles, all large birds in North America, over 70 years later it is still found in the body fats of penquins in Antartica where it was never used within 1,000 miles.

YES!!! Please use the Adirondacks as a long term guinea pig and all the people, animals, microbiota as a test. forget forever wild at a whim and dump poison and see what happens. we can always create a new preserve right?

APA needs to be over hauled for failure in its very bylaws of protecting the adirondacks and the nature preserve. Approving again a chemical with huge outrage over previous APA approval.

"If a chemical kills something, it can't be good for everything else."

Instead lets make real effort to stop spread of milfoil to other lakes.

The whole point of forever wild is it is to be the safest place for life to exist. That nature is as intended, not poisoned where convenient, or a test bed for unknown consequences, but preserved as a role model, to save all life within it's borders"

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James says

[May 14, 2023 at 9:36 am \(https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620544\)](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620544)

So let an invasive species brought in by some idiot who doesn't know how to clean his boat just choke it out and turn it into a green mat? That's not "as nature intended" and the forever wild designation doesn't mean you think it does.

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joe quellman says

[May 16, 2023 at 12:57 pm \(https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620587\)](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620587)

is “forever wild” the equivalent of “never again”?

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AdirondackAI says

[May 14, 2023 at 12:49 pm \(https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620547\)](https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/lake-luzerne-herbicide#comment-620547)

“Nature as Intended” does not include invasive species. Therein lies the conundrum.

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