

The Post-Star

## Milfoil invading Hadlock Pond

**NICK REISMAN**

[reisman@poststar.com](mailto:reisman@poststar.com) | Posted: Tuesday, September 1, 2009 12:00 am

FORT ANN - Another headache is in store for the property owners who live near Hadlock Pond.

The manmade lake has an infestation of Eurasian milfoil, an invasive aquatic species of plant that reproduces with breakneck speed.

On a brilliant and cool Tuesday afternoon, Hadlock Pond resident Alex DiLallo took his motorboat onto the lake to inspect the growth.

"This is worse than I thought," said DiLallo, the president of the Lake Hadlock Association, a neighborhood group. "It's worse than I ever imagined."

DiLallo surveyed pockets of the weed growing around the rim of the pond.

An underwater forest of what appeared to be pine branches swayed in the clear water in various portions of the lake.

DiLallo could only shake his head.

Four years ago, the lake's dam failed and a cascade of water rushed out, damaging numerous homes and leaving behind an empty lake bed.

The dam was rebuilt and the pond had finally refilled by 2008.

Now, after replacing a dam for \$7 million, the property owners will likely have to pay to remove the troublesome weed from the bottom of the river. "We got a triple whammy," said Cliff Nelson, another resident and homeowners' association treasurer. "Three years of no water and incredibly high taxes."

The milfoil was most likely introduced by a boat or water ski exposed to the plant in another body of water, said Tyler Smith, an aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program.

"We'd love to go back in time to see that first introduction in Hadlock Pond and how it got in there," Smith said. "It's probably 99 percent of the time on boats and trailers that have been recreating in an infected water body."

A study will determine how much of the plant has entered the lake.

Residents aren't sure when the milfoil started to grow. They were made aware of the infestation the first week of August when an inspector from the Adirondack Park Agency came to review the license for a weed harvester.

Tests of the plant growing along the bottom of the lake came back positive for milfoil.

"I had the impression that we saw some weed, but we thought it was American milfoil," said another resident, Gene Connell. "It really blossomed in the last month."

Now the challenge is to find a way to pay for the milfoil's removal. The options aren't cheap. One solution is to rob the plants of sunlight by placing a mat over them. Another is to have scuba divers pick the plants out by their roots.

Like a starfish whose separated limbs can form new organisms, Eurasian milfoil can reproduce when broken apart.

The property owners association is meeting at 9 a.m. Saturday at the West For Ann firehouse to discuss the options. Smith will be on hand to answer questions.

The 268 property owners live in a special tax district.

Fort Ann Town Supervisor Gayle Hall maintains that taxes from the district are used to pay for the new dam and its upkeep. Hadlock Pond residents, however, believe the tax should be used for all maintenance on the lake.

Hall has suggested that a new tax district could be created on top of the existing one. "At this point the (tax) district that's there is for the dam only," Hall said. "It's the homeowners association's responsibility. The possibility for another district is always there."

How much the removal would cost won't be determined until the study is done, Hall said.

"We're just at the wait-and-see point from the town's perspective and really until the study's done we don't have any idea as to the expense of it," she said. The idea of a new tax district isn't one residents and property owners will like, DiLallo said.

"Number one, it's going to be a tough sell and number two, it's the only solution," DiLallo said. "It's the best solution to manage this mess."