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APA may allow milfoil herbicide

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LAKE LUZERNE - For the first time, the Adirondack Park Agency may allow milfoil to be controlled with an herbicide in a waterway within the park.

The town has asked for a permit to use Renovate OTF, an aquatic herbicide, in May to control Eurasian watermilfoil in 11 acres at the south end of Lake Luzerne.

APA documents state that 1,560 pounds of the chemical would be used "to manage an area with moderate to dense beds of milfoil growth in order to improve the ecological, recreational, and aesthetic values of Lake Luzerne."

If approved, the application would be the first time the APA allows milfoil to be fought with a chemical following a denial in 2003 of an application to use herbicides in Lake George.

Currently approved options for controlling the invasive plant include hand-harvesting, suction harvesting and benthic barrier, which involves spreading a mat to keep sunlight from reaching the plant.

While APA staff has recommended approving the application at this month's meeting, which begins Thursday, a letter from the Adirondack Council has sprung up in opposition.

"We believe the commissioners of the Adirondack Park Agency need to seek additional information from the town of Lake Luzerne about its application to use a chemical in part of the lake," Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian Houseal stated in a press release. "It appears from the record that the town has taken some steps to remove invasive plants without using an herbicide, but that those programs were short in duration and very limited in scope. The APA needs to review the available, non-toxic options, and whether they have been fully explored, before it considers granting a permit to dump 1,500 pounds of herbicide in a portion of this magnificent lake."

Keith McKeever, a spokesman for the APA, said agency officials will review the application on Thursday morning and make a decision. They can approve it, deny it or send it to a public hearing.