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Chemical weeding out milfoil

Triclopyr successful in killing abundant Lake Luzerne plant

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LAKE LUZERNE ♦ Just three months after the first

time the use of a chemical to rid a lake of an invasive weed was allowed in the Adirondack Park, the Adirondack Park Agency and the resident who spearheaded the effort are rallying around its success.

"At this point in time, it definitely seems to have worked," Adirondack Park Agency spokesman Keith McKeever

said. "We're happy."

Robert Sherman, the head of the town's Aquatic Conservation Task Force, said there is no sign of any Eurasian watermilfoil, an invasive plant species, in the entire 15-acre area of Lake Luzerne that was treated in May with triclopyr, also known by the brand name Renovate OTF.

Before the treatment, he said, the southern area of the lake had the thickest milfoil beds out of any area in Lake Luzerne.

Eurasian watermilfoil is a nuisance to swimmers and boaters, and kills off native plants. The project was the first instance in which a chemical was used to combat

milfoil in any lake in the Adirondack Park, and was approved by the APA.

"People can swim, boat and fish in that area," Sherman said.

Since the application, Sherman said, the water was tested until the concentration

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Divers will hand-pick dead plants

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of the chemical got down to a minimal level. The last tests should be done after Labor Day, he said, and a survey will be completed by mid-September during which scientists will assess what kind of plant life remains in the lake after the milfoil was eradicated.

Both Sherman and McKeever said the Lake Luzerne project will serve as a model for other similar projects in the Adirondacks.

"Now that the APA has seen its effectiveness, it should be somewhat easier to get a permit," Sherman said. "I think in the long run, it'll open the door a crack."

McKeever called the proj-

ect a successful way to treat milfoil, but said it does not mean that chemicals will get blanket approvals in the future. The way this project was designed and implemented sets a model in the park, he said, especially since the lake is not used for drinking water or irrigation.

Sherman said the sequestering curtain, a barrier placed at the north end of the treatment area to keep the chemical from spreading throughout the entire lake, made everything possible.

McKeever agreed that the curtain was a main contributor to the project's success.

But efforts to keep the lake milfoil-free aren't done, Sherman said.

The plant is spread to bodies of water mainly by boats

that travel from one body of water to another. And while a lake steward program in Lake George has people standing by at launch sites to inspect boats for milfoil and other invasive plants, the same program isn't in place in Lake Luzerne, Sherman said.

Lake Luzerne only allows vessels with up to 7.5 horsepower, he said, and kayaks and canoes usually navigate the waters over yachts.

"A lake steward would be sitting there (doing nothing)," he said.

Launch sites in Lake Lu-

zerne have a sign and a hose, he said, urging boat owners to wash their vessels before launching them into the lake and potentially respreading the weed.

In the meantime, though, Sherman said the town would hire a company of divers to hand-pick dead plants from the chemically treated area and any remaining live plants in the rest of the lake.

"The ultimate plan is to have them come every year," he said. "Every year they'll be coming in and going over the complete lake."