



Chester wants to kill milfoil with chemical

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CHESTER -- Town officials hope next spring to make Chester the second Adirondack community to use an herbicide to kill Eurasian milfoil in one of its lakes.

The Town Board Tuesday night voted 4 to 0, with Supervisor Fred Monroe absent, to seek Adirondack Park Agency and state Department of Environmental Conservation permits to apply Renovate OTF in a 14-acre section of southern Loon Lake, an area overrun with dense beds of the invasive plant.

"Right now, that area is very difficult for boating," said Ed Griesmere, president of the Loon Lake Park District Association. "You wouldn't want to swim there."

The town has spent thousands of dollars since 2000 to stem the march of the invasive plant. Local high school and college students have been posted at the local boat launch for four summers to stop other visible invaders, but the assault of the already-established milfoil continues.

"If it works, it's worth it," said Town Board member Mike Packer, of the herbicide.

The town spent \$55,000 this year for Lycot Environmental to study the milfoil problem in Loon Lake, a requirement for APA consideration. Lake Luzerne in 2010 became the first in-park community granted state permission to use an herbicide to fight invasives. It cost the community \$15,000 to spread the chemical over an 11-acre swath of Lake Luzerne.

Lake Luzerne officials have raved about the effectiveness of Renovate's active plant-killing ingredient, triclopyr, and its low cost when compared to labor-intensive benthic matting and hand-harvesting.

The chemical attacks only plants in the dicot — or broad-leafed family — meaning most indigenous species are spared.

Even so, the APA in its approval of the Lake Luzerne project required the town to apply the herbicide in early spring to avoid killing the few dicot species that are indigenous to the region.

APA has yet to approve another herbicide permit since the widely watched Lake Luzerne decision.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has deemed triclopyr "practically nontoxic" to human and animal populations when diluted in water bodies.

Triclopyr has become the preferred method of milfoil eradication in much of the U.S.

The use of an herbicide in the 6-million-acre state park worries some environmentalists, who believe it's a slippery slope in a region largely devoted to wilderness preservation.

Ticonderoga is working through a triclopyr application for Eagle Lake, officials said.

But milfoil isn't the only invasive in the region, and at least one Chester official argues the town should begin a boat-washing operation.

Highway Superintendent Jason Monroe said the community should consider restricting access to Loon Lake to just the one existing private marina and the public boat launch, then build a seasonal boat-washing station.

Town Board member Edna Wells said the municipal wash station would be useful to not only catch incoming invaders, but to also contain Loon Lake's milfoil, which frequently attaches to boats and trailers.