



Environmental group opposing herbicide use in Loon Lake

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March 12, 2013 1:51 pm • JON ALEXANDER -- jalexander@poststar.com (5) Comments

CHESTER -- An environmental group is hoping Chester's plans to use herbicide in Loon Lake against Eurasian milfoil dies at the Adirondack Park Agency, a fate similar to hundreds of snails in Lake Luzerne in 2011 after the chemical was applied there.

The Adirondack Council has petitioned the Adirondack Park Agency to send Chester's permit application to adjudicatory hearing, an often lengthy legal process and the first step toward killing the permit.

APA commissioners are scheduled to hold a vote Friday on Chester's plan to apply the chemical Renovate OTF this spring over 15 acres of milfoil-soaked Loon Lake.

Lake Luzerne applied the federally certified herbicide in its lake in spring 2011 after years of pricey hand-harvesting efforts. It was the first time an herbicide was approved by APA commissioners for use in the Adirondacks.

Most private and federal studies suggest Renovate's active agent, triclopyr, is designed to target just broad-leafed plants, including the invasive milfoil.

But the Adirondack Council charges that more than just the invasive plant was devastated by the herbicide in Lake Luzerne, as the chemical's application coincided with a die-off of the banded mysterysnail.

"We think it's worth it to try and avoid this kind of collateral damage," said John Sheehan, spokesman for the Adirondack Council.

There was a die-off of the banded snail shortly after Renovate's treatment, said APA spokesman Keith McKeever.

But state officials believe that may simply be a coincidence.

"They're known to experience regular die-offs," McKeever said, adding that most science says the herbicide doesn't affect animals. "Basically, what we understand from the various studies is, it's not toxic to snails."

APA staff will suggest the approval of Chester's application so long as the town spreads the

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herbicide as early as possible this spring, before native plants start to sprout, according to APA's agenda. Staff also suggests limiting the concentration of the waterborne chemical and will require a barrier be put in the lake to keep the Renovate from spreading throughout the water body.

"We have had that happen a couple of times before we used that stuff," Lake Luzerne Supervisor Gene Merlino said of the post-chemical die-off.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation and state Health Department both assessed the situation and determined it was "No big deal," Merlino said.

The banded mysterysnail lives in a gray area between invasive species and slowly spreading native.

The U.S. Geological Survey lists the snail as native to most of the Northeast, including Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, though it was believed to be intentionally introduced into the Hudson River in the mid-20th century.

The coincidentally timed die-off didn't raise many alarms among state regulators because of debate about whether the animal is native to the region or an invasive species, Sheehan said.

"It appears to be creeping north because of climate change," Sheehan said, while arguing that the snail's presence in Lake Luzerne, and other regional water bodies, is a natural event not directly created by mankind.

McKeever called the snail a "non-native."

The Adirondack Council views the snail die-off as evidence that Renovate is far more damaging to animal life in general than believed by regulators. The snails, a common prey species for birds and larger fish, could be spreading the toxic agent throughout the ecosystem after they're eaten, Sheehan said.

But the town views the newfound opposition, and request for hearings, as a tactic to stall the project for at least another year, and potentially kill the proposal altogether.

"They've known about it since last summer," said Chester Supervisor Fred Monroe. "Why are they trying to stop it now?"

Over the last decade, Chester has annually spent thousands of dollars on hand-harvesting and matting efforts. The town sees the chemical application as a relatively cheap and effective way of killing a large amount of the recreation-limiting plant.

Tags [Herbicide](#), [Adirondack Park Agency](#), [Lake Luzerne](#), [Adirondack Council](#), [Invasive Species](#), [John Sheehan](#), [Loon Lake](#), [Keith McKeever](#), [Chemical](#), [Snail](#), [Environmental](#), [Chester](#)

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At what point do "we the people of the Adirondacks" tell the environmentalists to get out of our lives?



sasquatch - 13 hours ago

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The Adirondack Council is a pimple on the ass of progress. Banded mysterysnail? John Sheehan (and that other "John", of a local, reactionary website with environmental spin) should check out all the snails that get eaten as escargots in France, or here. I prefer normal food, though. Sheehan can party should go on a business trip to China and try to teach them how to preserve the forests and the flora and fauna. Hah. But pay for the trip themselves. And no escargots for them. No calamari, for sure. Let them be vegans.



loneoak - March 12, 2013 5:05 pm

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No conclusive reports to their claims but they will tie up any progress. Environmentalists use

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this to stop something they disagree with all the time. The DEC and DOH see no problems and we pay them for this. Those agencies must not be credible if their assessments are not listened to but some environmentalist group can make an unsubstantiated claim and stop everything. Any wonder why many people have a poor opinion of the tree hugers.



ctweewwww - March 12, 2013 4:43 pm

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I told them to get on the herbicide program in 2008. Public perception comes around real fast when the money runs out.

As far as weeding the forest, the log markets may never come back enough to make that profitable.



bodie - March 12, 2013 2:37 pm

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Surprise.. has any environmental group ever been in favor of anything without over testing and over litigating everything.Remember the 9 years to get the Tupper Lake Resort thru the APA>You weed your garden ..let's weed the Adirondack forest .. a surprising healthy idea.

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