

APA approves town's use of herbicide in Loon Lake

MARCH 15, 2013 7:00 PM • [JON ALEXANDER - JALEXANDER@POSTSTAR.COM](mailto:JON.ALEXANDER@POSTSTAR.COM)

RAY BROOK -- Adirondack Park Agency commissioners on Friday unanimously backed Chester's proposal to use herbicide in Loon Lake, setting up the second time chemicals will be used to attack invasive flora within the Adirondack Park.

Chester's contractor, Lycott Environmental Inc., now has the go-ahead to apply on May 13 more than 1,500 pounds of Renovate OTF over a 15-acre, Eurasian milfoil-socked section of the 586-acre lake's southeastern basin.

APA's approval came in the face of resistance from the environmental group, Adirondack Council, which noted early this week that the 2011 application of Renovate in Lake Luzerne was closely followed by a die-off of the banded mysterysnail.

The Adirondack Council wanted the issue sent to an adjudicatory hearing, a lengthy legal review that would have blocked Chester's plan, at least for this year.

APA officials countered that mass die-offs of the snail species's adults is a common occurrence in the spring and that the timing in Lake Luzerne was coincidental.

APA analyst Lee Walrath noted Thursday that the regionally common methods of killing invasives, especially the use of life-smothering benthic mats, are even more damaging to non-target plants and animals unlucky enough to be beneath them.

"You're also effectively eliminating all flora and fauna under the barrier," Walrath said.

APA late last year expressed concern about the number of mats employed in Lake George's war on the Asian clam.

The available science indicates that Renovate's active ingredient, triclopyr, targets substantially fewer species than other invasive-fighting methods, especially when applied in the spring before indigenous aquatic plants have sprouted. There are several indigenous plant species susceptible to Renovate within the treatment area, Walrath said.

But the Adirondack Council remained skeptical of the use of chemicals in Adirondack waters.

"We're concerned chemicals have been seen as an easy solution," said John Sheehan, the organization's spokesman.

Renovate is cheap as well as easy.

Chester's annual spending to fight Loon lake's constantly repopulating milfoil clusters has been rising. The town spent \$5,000 on hand-harvesting efforts in 2005. That amount ballooned to \$40,000 in 2010 for harvesting and mats and topped off at \$55,000 in 2012.

Chester's proposed 2013 milfoil battle is expected to cost about \$85,000, \$30,000 of it for the

Renovate treatment, Walrath said. Town officials hope that, after the application near the public boat launch, annual management costs will drop to about \$30,000 and slow the spread of milfoil, which often attaches to boats and trailers, throughout the lake and region.

"We see it not as an ongoing control method," said Chester Supervisor Fred Monroe. "We see it as a way to knock down the infestation so we can control it at a reasonable cost."

Although no dissent to Chester's application could be found among APA commissioners, at least one found merit in the Adirondack Council's concern about herbicide use in the park.

APA should begin a discussion about the use of chemicals, the cheap alternative for cash-strapped local governments fighting invasives, in Adirondack waters, said Commissioner Dick Booth.

"I don't think we should hold up a project now," Booth said. "But they've raised a valid point."

Sheehan said his organization will monitor the impacts of Renovate in and around the Loon Lake watershed.