

PRESS REPUBLICAN

Letters to the Editor: March 3, 2011

Method successful

TO THE EDITOR: In the Feb. 15 article "Fight against Eagle Lake milfoil gains support," the president of the Eagle Lake property owners was quoted as saying, "Hand-harvesting actually spreads the problem. When you hand-harvest, small pieces break off and float away. Then it grows again."

As co-owner of a milfoil hand-harvesting company, I am struck by this comment. After eight years of success stories in our field, the debate should be over. But, like any other trade, it can be done poorly and can show poor results. No one has claimed recently that weeding a garden is pointless, but it would be, if it weren't done properly.

We are in the business of doing the job right, and as a result we have saved many lakes, created good-paying jobs and pioneered a growing field.

As for the "small pieces breaking off," we have methods that eliminate that problem, as we should. The problem exists, by the way, whether you touch the milfoil or not. The plant "auto-fragments" throughout the growing season as its intentional spread mechanism.

Renovate is a successful herbicide. Cost-wise, it pairs up closely with hand-harvesting. However, unlike hand-harvesting, the dead plants stay in the lake. That means nutrient loading, algae blooms and a bountiful growth culture for the surviving (yes, surviving) milfoil to re-colonize the lake bottom.

It's important to remember that Renovate is not 100 percent effective. In a hand-harvesting world, we make the milfoil growth so scarce that we can keep it that way cheaply. In a Renovate world, one simply wipes out the mass growth every few years, adding each time to the lake's nutrient levels and further promoting its demise.

Let's not manage our lakes as we have managed our lawns. Sometimes it's better to just reach down and pull the weed.

Andrew Lewis

Saranac Lake