CAZENOVIA LAKE PROGRESS REPORT

By Liz Moran

The battle to control Eurasian watermilfoil in Cazenovia Lake continues, with substantial progress evident in 2010. This invasive (non-native) species had become prolific in the lake, expanding by 2008 to a degree that recreational uses were severely impaired. As many are aware, Allied Biological Inc. returned to the lake in June, 2010 for a second year of chemical application, and treated approximately 175 acres of the southeastern and southwestern shoreline with triclopyr (trade name Renovate OTF). The lake restoration effort began in 2009; 234 acres along the northern shoreline were treated with Renovate, with very positive results. A team from Cornell University surveyed the lake in August 2009, and documented the dramatic loss of milfoil in the treated areas.

About four weeks have now elapsed since the 2010 treatment. On July 14, 2010, we completed a visual survey of the entire lake shoreline to evaluate the effectiveness of the second year treatment program. This was a qualitative survey; a quantitative (more scientific) survey will be conducted later this summer. Thanks, once again, to Rich Husted and Jerry Mayright, John Langey and Ralph Monforte for providing the boat, lunches and intellectual curiosity as we puttered along the lakeshore and peered into the water to identify the vegetation and discuss how the lake had changed.

Overall, we came away very excited and impressed. The 2010 results are great- I heard myself use the term “fabulous”, not a highly technical term, but just about right. We could barely find any of the target nuisance species, Eurasian watermilfoil, in the lake. The few specimens we could find were yellow and falling to the lake bottom. The southern basin, which for years has been choked with weeds, has large expanses of open sandy bottom, interspersed with healthy-looking native plants forming a low canopy. Areas treated in 2009 remain essentially free of milfoil. The one exception is the far northern inlet, in an area that DEC required us to isolate from the rest of the lake during treatment and for several weeks post treatment. This requirement was included to protect a rare aquatic plant species, autumnal water starwort, found growing near the colder springs that seep into the lake at the northern tip. The Watershed Council will convene and discuss non-chemical approaches to eliminating milfoil in that one remaining pocket.

It was clear on our boat trip that aquatic plants are abundant. There are many different kinds and some are present at relatively high density. In fact, the Cornell survey in 2009 found 36 unique species- which is among the highest of any lake in NY. Plants will grow wherever the sunlight can reach the lake bottom, and when there are adequate nutrients, so there will always be plants in the lake. Aquatic plants are an important component of a healthy ecosystem- they help stabilize soft sediment, provide food and shelter for aquatic animals and spawning habitat for fish.

Some of the plants we observed can easily be confused with Eurasian watermilfoil. Especially toward the northern end, we saw abundant water stargrass and several species of pondweed, including bassweed, which has very large leaves. There are some good on-line resources for identifying aquatic plants- I look to http://www.mainevolunteerlakemonitors.org/mciap/herbarium/ for good photos, or the line drawings in my trusty (but pricy) print copy of Through the Looking Glass. Overall, we have made huge

strides in restoring Cazenovia Lake through our community's investment and cooperative approach. There is more to be done, but the chemical intervention has knocked the milfoil down to manageable levels. Great work, everyone.