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Association seeks approval of milfoil measures in Adirondack lake

By PAUL POST, The Saratogian

LUZERNE — Environmentalists and town officials are at odds over plans to use an herbicide to kill Eurasian milfoil, an invasive plant species, in Lake Luzerne.

The town and a lake association are seeking approval to apply 1,560 pounds of triclopyr on 11 of the lake's 111 acres, primarily at the southern end this May and June.

But the Adirondack Council says the chemical would harm several protected plant species, too. The Adirondack Park Agency was scheduled to review the town's permit on Thursday.

"The weeds are getting so bad in our lake," Supervisor Eugene Merlino said. "If some kid falls out of a canoe they could easily get tangled and drown. We've tried harvesting. As fast as we pull it out, it grows right back. It's like trying to fight a house fire with a teaspoon. They're already using the same chemical in Saratoga Lake. Nobody said anything there. It's just because it's inside the Adirondack Park."

The APA has never granted permission to use an aquatic herbicide in an Adirondack lake or pond, the council says.

"We believe the commissioners of the Adirondack Park Agency need to seek additional information from the town of Lake Luzerne about its application to use a chemical in part of the lake," council Executive Director Brian L. Houseal said. "It appears from the record that the town has taken some steps to remove invasive plants without using an herbicide, but that those programs were short in duration and very limited in scope. The APA needs to review the available, non-toxic options, and whether they have been fully explored."

The federal government warns against using any water treated with this chemical for any irrigation purpose for four months after treatment ends, the council said.

The council said non-chemical programs have proven successful in Lake George and Upper Saranac Lake.

The Lake George Park Commission and FUND for Lake George removed 30 tons of invasive milfoil last year and has placed 30 acres of benthic barrier on the lake bottom to prevent re-growth around public boat launches and docks.

"The existing control program for the lake cost less than \$15,000 per year, when it was in practice," Houseal said. "Now, despite the clear success of these methods on Lake George and

Upper Saranac Lake, the town wants to spend much more money on a method that will require still more herbicides in future years."

"We have seen these chemical control programs employed just outside the Adirondack Park with very little success," Houseal said. "Chemicals are reapplied over and over again, year after year, and yet the invasive plants grow right back, while the loss in native and protected plants is not even figured into the equation."