

The Saratogian
February 13, 2010

Milfoil treatment concerns environmentalists

By PAUL POST, The Saratogian

LAKE LUZERNE — The town's plan to control Eurasian milfoil with a chemical herbicide could lead to its widespread use throughout the Adirondacks.

But environmentalists are concerned about unknown and possible negative impacts from the relatively new product — triclopyr — that's been used at Saratoga Lake and three bodies of water in the Finger Lakes region.

The Adirondack Park Agency for the first time ever on Thursday approved the use of chemicals to control invasive aquatic plants in the Adirondack Park. Plans call for applying 1,560 pounds of the granular substance to Lake Luzerne to control a worsening, heavy infestation of milfoil that grows to the surface, making boating and swimming both difficult and hazardous.

"It'll be before Memorial Day," town Supervisor Gene Merlino said. "It only takes four hours (to apply). It dissipates and it's gone. We're going to close the lake for 72 hours."

Triclopyr is made by the same company that produces Sonar, which has previously been disallowed in Lake George. The Adirondack Council environmental group says the herbicide might harm protected water plants, too.

"It's a shortcut that doesn't get you anywhere," council spokesman John Sheehan said. "It's not a substitute for the other methods. They still have to do harvesting and apply mats to the lake bottom. We don't know the long-term impacts of using it."

APA spokesman Keith McKeever said Lake Luzerne is a test case.

"If this goes well it will change the direction of how to deal with aquatic plants," he said. "This project certainly could set a standard."

Chemicals will be applied in early May before milfoil, an extremely aggressive plant, starts to grow. McKeever said the weed-like plant has overwhelmed the lake, rendering non-chemical efforts ineffective.

By using triclopyr the town can hopefully stay on top of the problem, he said. About 11 of the lake's 111 acres will be treated. Merlino said the town will hire an aquatic chemical company to apply triclopyr over the lake's surface. Curtains, suspended in the water, will surround the treatment area separating it from the rest of the lake.

The APA permit says a detailed aquatic plant survey must be completed by Sept. 15 and submitted to the agency by Dec. 15. The permit is for 2010 only and future permits might hinge on the success of this year's program, McKeever said.

Triclopyr has been discussed for Hadlock Pond in Fort Ann and Eagle Lake in Ticonderoga, but no formal applications have been filed, he said.