

This article by Larry Rothenberg was published in the Skaneateles Journal on January 10, 2007.

Lake Weed Targeted for Eradication

Last week in this column Dr. Robert Werner described how Eurasian watermilfoil has established a foothold in Skaneateles Lake and is spreading at an alarming rate. A survey performed this past summer showed that this invasive species has spread throughout the lake, suggesting that any eradication program needs to be implemented immediately. By waiting even a few years more without intervention the problem could easily become irreversible and the nature of Skaneateles Lake would be changed forever.

With the urgency of this situation in mind, Skaneateles Town Supervisor Phil Tierney established The Town of Skaneateles Aquatic Invasive Species Committee which has developed a milfoil eradication program that should be implemented in the summer of 2007.

The eradication program involves removing the milfoil using a technique that pulls the plant up by its roots, thus eliminating the plant and its ability to spread. Teams of divers perform this process throughout the lake during the summer of 2007 and then again in the summer of 2008. Divers operate off a specially-designed pontoon boat that uses a suctioning system to ensure pieces of the milfoil do not escape as the plant is removed. This technique has been used successfully in other similar-sized lakes such as Upper Saranac Lake which is now essentially milfoil free.

To test this plan, we built this specially-designed vessel and ran a pilot test this past summer. The results of this pilot were very encouraging – it showed that the problem is still at a manageable level if we act immediately. We were able to eradicate milfoil from a 2500 sq. ft test patch near the Mandana boat launch and we were able to use the results of this pilot project to better understand how much work will be involved in the actual plan.

Anyone interested in making a donation please give us a call at 685-0777. An informational website is currently under development which will illustrate the severity of the problem and provide further details on the project.

We are at a critical time in the history of Skaneateles Lake. If we do not act now, the lake we all know as unique for its cleanliness and clarity will become increasingly clogged with weeds. Supporting and implementing this program is essential to maintaining this important community resource.