

SLA MILFOIL MITIGATION – 2022

Questions from July 7 Public Information Meeting -

QUESTIONS RELATED TO HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS

- 1. If hand harvesting works well in other lakes, why not in Sylvia?**
- 2. If hand harvesting works so well in the Adirondacks, why not here?**
- 3. If hand harvesting were selected as the only solution, how many weeks would it take Aqualogic to satisfactorily mitigate Milfoil?**
- 4. Is there any way to safely hand harvest Eurasian Milfoil in shallow water?**
- 5. What are the plans for educating camp owners on how to properly remove milfoil on their own frontage? I think Aqualogic could meet with maybe each road at one camp, and show campers how to properly remove milfoil and dispose of it? Aqualogic has been nowhere near my camp or nearby neighbors.**
- 6. Are there programs to teach camp owners to scuba dive to hand pick?**

Hand harvesting has not controlled Eurasian milfoil in any lakes. Per Dominic/ Aqualogic, lakes who only hand harvest have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, and/or have started off with a smaller milfoil infestation and/or have a lake bottom substrate that allows divers to remove all the roots.

To satisfactorily mitigate milfoil, Dom estimates 14-20 weeks of harvesting per year, for up to 10 years. The cost would be between \$120,000 and \$250,000 per year.

Many campers already understand how to pull milfoil. You grasp the plant as close to the root ball as possible, and pull.... Much like crabgrass! It's important to get the roots, because the plant will continue to grow if you only remove the fronds.

Aqualogic does offer scuba classes and certification, and invasive plant management training. Interested parties would need to check with Aqualogic directly for locations and availability.

Aqualogic divers were at Sylvia Lake the weeks of June 13 and June 20. They tackled ten different high-density areas around the lake – they did not harvest on the south shore this year, because it is such a thick infestation that their efforts would have had little discernible impact.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO METHOD OF REMOVING MILFOIL

- 7. What information is available regarding mechanical harvesters? Do they cut or pull the plant?**
- 8. Do benthic barrier mats work? Didn't the SLA purchase some?**

Mechanical harvesters work in several different ways – some simply cut the plants like grass; some use suction to pull plants from soft substrate, some scrape the lake bottom to remove plants. Sylvia Lake's bottom is too rocky to use suction, and we are concerned that "mowing" would simply spread more cut sprigs to re-root elsewhere.

We have purchased over a dozen benthic barrier mats, but we no longer have an adequate number of able-bodied volunteers who can pull them up, clean them, and reposition them several times each summer. Several camp owners have purchased mats privately as well.

QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW PROCELLA-COR WORKS

- 9. Where do the dead plants go?**
- 10. Under certain conditions treatment can result in oxygen depletion or loss due to decomposition of dead plants which may cause fish suffocation?**
- 11. When would the herbicide be applied? Spring? Few people, shorter plants?**
- 12. Is the herbicide a liquid? How is it distributed?**
- 13. How often does the herbicide need to be applied?**
- 14. Is the chemical a liquid or a granular product?**
- 15. Does the herbicide require “boosters”?**
- 16. Can milfoil patches that are removed be reseeded with native plants?**

ProcellaCor is a liquid, applied on the surface. Per Glen, Milfoil plants are especially susceptible to ProcellaCor. Other plants, such as coontail and water lilies, are less susceptible at the concentrations utilized, and are not usually impacted by milfoil treatments. Native pondweeds, naiads, elodea, eelgrass and most other native submersed plants are not affected.

ProcellaCor is a single application, usually applied in late May or early June, when plants are emerging from the substrate. The single application should last 2-3 seasons, or more. Reseeding with native species would not likely be successful. Milfoil is colonizing areas that are not suitable habitat for other submersed plants. Shallow areas will likely be recolonized by native species.

MORE QUESTIONS RELATED TO COSTS

- 17. Has a cost comparison been completed on each milfoil removal option?**
- 18. Approx cost of total lake application of herbicide?**
- 19. How much has the SLA spent over the years on milfoil mitigation.**
- 20. At this point, are we just throwing money at the problem with at best limited tangible progress in abatement?**
- 21. Considering the SLA has limited fundraising ability, what is the plan to engage the Town of Fowler to assist in funding the milfoil management plan?**
- 22. Has the association researched the possibility of having a special tax/charge on lake property owners to fund the milfoil removal?**

Since 2004, the SLA has spent approximately \$38,500 on mitigation efforts. The majority of funds have gone to 3rd party hand harvesting (\$33,500), with other monies used for milfoil buoys / hardware, DEC buoy permitting, benthic barrier mats. This total does NOT include resident purchases of benthic mats (~\$300 each), gas and damage done to residents' boats

used in moving mats, scuba air and repairs to equipment for deep dives, and of course the hundreds of person-hours our residents and volunteers have contributed to this effort.

Our harvesting company (Aqualogic) is the only environmentally based harvest program in New York State. Going forward, the president of Aqualogic does not recommend hand harvesting of milfoil without incorporating herbicide application ONLY in the concentrated area on the South end of the lake. It is estimated that this is about a 4-5 acre area, at a cost of approximately \$15,000. Hand harvesting and herbicide use to mitigate milfoil infestation thereafter are to be determined, based on the scope and distribution of target areas.

The MTF believes that our efforts in the past two decades have prevented more serious infestation. We will continue to explore every option to protect our beautiful lake, and to educate our neighbors about the milfoil problem. We believe that tangible results are possible. We plan to work cooperatively with the Town of Fowler, St. Lawrence County, and any applicable state agencies, to secure funding.

We believe funds may also be available through Federal Environmental Protection programs, but have not determined exact program information. We have not explored a "special tax," as that could only be done through town, county, state and likely federal processes.

OTHER QUESTIONS:

23. Since the major area is near the inlet, how far do you anticipate the herbicide to travel? How long do these areas need to be quarantined? You mentioned positives, what negative impacts have you witnessed?

From Glen at Solitude Lake Mgt.:

Since one treatment area is in the vicinity of the inlet, some of the herbicide will diffuse more than if treatment were sheltered in a cove. The amount of movement depends on the inlet flow, the density of the plants (high density plant biomass tends to prevent dispersion), and prevailing winds to some degree. My expectation is that milfoil within 100' of the treatment area may show impacts, but not other plants.

The treatment areas do not require any special quarantine aside from the restriction in using lake water for irrigation. The time required for the herbicide to dissipate, samples be collected, lab analysis performed and results reported to DEC will take about 10 days to have the irrigation restriction removed. There is no impact to swimming, fishing or boating.

Negative impacts are subjective. I have seen the floating plant water shield temporarily and partially decrease from a ProcellaCOR treatment. DEC would view that as a negative, but the client viewed it as a positive. In another lake milfoil was successfully removed in its entirety, but some residents were disappointed that native weeds were still a nuisance.

In terms of the more concerning negative impacts such as fish kills or algae blooms, I have not seen either of these occur following a ProcellaCOR application. Actually, most herbicides do

not trigger these events, but ProcellaCOR is especially protective since it leads to a slow plant mortality and leaves the native plants in place.

This question can only be answered if we request a permit for herbicide application. The DEC would then work with us to determine the area of permitted application, the extent of required notifications, and the specific information required to be disseminated by affected property owners.

- 24. Can the SLA submit an herbicide application to DEC, or does that have to be done by DEC?**
- 25. If the lake, as a whole, does not do an application of herbicide, can an individual homeowner do it on his specific property frontage?**
- 26. Does the SLA have legal standing in the DEC Permitting Process?**

The SLA Board does not believe we can file an application to the DEC, as we are not a legal entity. DEC does not file applications, it receives them. One of the sources the board has identified states that "The person applying for a permit must be the owner of the land bordering the water body, a person leasing land that borders the water, an incorporated association of landowners or lessees, or a government agency". Another source stated, "The permit applicant needs to be a riparian owner, or association of riparian owners, so the SLA or Town of Fowler could submit the application".

- 27. Pleasant Lake did not show up on the slide listing of clients. I've tried to contact an owner there.**

Pleasant Lake is not a customer of Solitude Lake Management. They used a different provider who a member of the MTF spoke with more than 2 years ago. That provider (and a representative from Pleasant Lake who we spoke with) were very pleased with the results. Only a small strip on the shoreline circumference was done because of the severe concentration of milfoil throughout Pleasant Lake. We would be happy to share our contact information with you.

- 28. NYS Supreme Court Justice Robert Muller recently ruled on a preliminary injunction that halted the application of ProcellaCor in Lake George. He ruled in favor of the Lake George Association, who were trying to halt Solitude Lake Management from using the pesticide. In his ruling, Justice Muller wrote "... the petitioners have succeeded in raising questions.... It is indisputable that if ProcellaCor does result in injury, that injury will be irreparable." What do you think he meant by irreparable?**

The SLA Board cannot infer Justice Muller's intent. We strongly suggest that people interested in the Lake George process do that research ~ their experience does not reflect our situation. There's also an informative video available on the SLA website under the Milfoil button, further explaining the Lake George Park Commission's reasoning.

29. SLU Professor Brad Baldwin is quoted as saying “Sylvia Lake is one of the most pristine bodies of water in the Adirondacks, with excellent chemical qualities and balance.” Why would anyone deliberately put that “balance” (that professor Baldwin alluded to) in jeopardy?

The Board does not assume that using ProcellaCor implies any jeopardy. We also recognize that the clarity of our waters has actually contributed to the magnitude of our problem, since the Aqualogic divers discovered healthy milfoil lodged in rock crevices 30 feet below the surface, much deeper than in murkier lakes. Our infestation is therefore more difficult to hand harvest, almost impossible to cover with mats, and is spreading undetected because we can't even see it.

30. What are “Article 78” proceedings and why did the Town of Hague (Lake George) et al, take such action?

An Article 78 proceeding is used to appeal a decision by any New York State or local agency in a New York State Court. We do not speak for the Town of Hague, so cannot comment on their decision to appeal an application permit.

31. Many lake associations are registered as LLCs. SLA is not. Is the SLA Board of Directors prepared to take on the liability (both as a group and as individual members of that group) should a lawsuit occur?

The SLA Board is well aware of its social and legal status. We have no intention of taking any action that could provoke a legal response at this time.

32. There is a perception (warranted or not) that the SLA Board of Directors are frustrated over their collective lack of progress in milfoil abatement. Is this true, and is it possible that emotions are, in part, motivating the SLA Board to take the more drastic measures (i.e. chemical pesticides)?

The SLA Board of Directors and Milfoil Task Force are indeed frustrated, that's true. We're frustrated by the continuing and worsening scope of our milfoil infestation. We're disappointed that a plant that came from someone's aquarium has become pervasive in North Country lakes. We're frustrated when boaters ignore warnings and run motors through thick surface patches of milfoil, creating sprigs that spread and grow. We're frustrated when visiting boats dump bilgewater and bait buckets containing weeds. We're frustrated when people ASK US to remove the milfoil that is growing in their own front yards, without trying to pull it themselves. We're frustrated that, since we began this project almost 20 years ago, many of us have lost the physical ability to lift mats, to swim down, pull weeds from 10 feet of water..... we're getting old and aging is frustrating. And, to be grammatically correct, it's an herbicide, not a pesticide. Used in much lighter concentrations than the chemicals used to kill dandelions in yards, or kill poison ivy along our driveways.

- 33. Even though the SLA represents roughly 1/3 of the land owners on the lake (only around 60 of the 190+ land owners on the lake are dues paying members of SLA) can a minority group such as the SLA make decisions for the entirety of the ownership group?**

As with most lake associations, participation is voluntary. Everyone can participate, whether they've paid \$25 dues or not. To date, no one has questioned our decisions to hold social events, to buy and implement benthic barrier mats, or to hire hand harvesters. In the absence of participation, we assume consent.

- 34. Solitude Lake Management recently contracted with the Lake George Park Commission (not to be confused with the Lake George Association) to provide chemical application of ProcellaCor. The courts have halted that application. Why did the State Supreme Court halt the application of ProcellaCor?**

Sylvia Lake is not Lake George, and our Board has no lawyers. We do not believe we can speak for the Park Commission, the Lake George Association, or the State Supreme Court, and would refer you to public records for more details about their situation. The taped interview on the SLA website under the Milfoil section is also quite informative.

- 35. I've heard a few comments from SLA Board members and Directors saying they wished more lake shore owners would get in the process of decision making. Yet, when a "public" information session such as this is held... and the public are not allowed to speak. Is this a wise and prudent direction to take if more public involvement is desired. Does the SLA Board of Directors offer more "public involvement" or more "public agreement"?**

The Board intended that the July 7 be an informational meeting. Lake residents were provided historical information regarding our milfoil mitigation efforts in the past. Representatives of Aqualogic and Solitude presented information and answered questions about their product and service offerings. The Board selected a written-question format for this meeting with the intent to have residents ask, and the panel answer, as many questions as possible in the allotted time frame. Additionally, we recorded the full meeting so that residents who could not attend could watch the recording on line. The Board felt a 90 minute meeting was a prudent goal for such a recording, with written questions allowing the Board to meet that goal.

The Board has had open forums in the past to discuss Milfoil, and will have such meetings in the future.

In addition, all Sylvia Lake residents are invited to join the Milfoil Task Force which provides an opportunity to discuss mitigation efforts.

36. If this really is an informational meeting, why wouldn't other experts – i.e. those representing opposing views – be recruited to speak? Our only expert is the representative from the company that is trying to gain a contract for application of the chemical ProcellaCor. Does the fact that the only guest speaker in attendance stands to profit from chemical application. How is this not a conflict of interest?

Our guest speakers were from Aqualogic (the hand-harvesting company we have used for two seasons) and Solitude Lake Management (a company with decades of experience in mitigating invasive growth in freshwater lakes in NY). If you have information about a professional, experienced freshwater invasive management expert who is opposed to the use of ProcellaCor, the Board would appreciate your sharing that contact.

37. Democracies are rooted in free speech and open dialog. What term could be used to describe this meeting where public comment is limited or outright curtailed?

This was presented as an informational meeting, to provide attendees with information about our history, our experiences, our recent deliberations, and the possible options going forward, which includes “doing nothing”. This meeting was not billed as a public forum. We believed (correctly, in retrospect) that there would be many questions and that we would have limited time for answers from our known professionals who have years of experience battling milfoil and other invasive weeds. This meeting was the beginning of a long process that will be based on everyone's understanding of the problem, and the options we face going forward.

38. Is the goal of the Milfoil Abatement Department (also known as the Milfoil Task Force) eradication or mitigation? Can we at least choose a consistent term? Maybe one less inflammatory and more realistic than eradication, because eradication is not going to happen.

The Board understands and agrees that eradication is not possible, without drastic measures and limiting any future introduction of milfoil back into the lake. However, we believe that it is possible to mitigate (reduce) problematic infestations. There are a variety of methods, from hand harvesting, to barrier mats, to chemicals. Not all properties are equally affected, and not all lake property owners care whether they have weeds in their space. Our goal is to limit negative impact for everyone.

39. Does the Milfoil Task Force and SLA Board of Directors have any regrets about the decisions they've made over the years? Doesn't some of this remind you of the children's tale about the chicken little? “The sky is falling, the sky is falling”. One observation re: the lake: Over the 4th with all the boating, swimming, fishing, tubing, sailing boards, fireworks, and family gatherings, did it look like a Lake that was in distress?

The Board stands by our past decisions to hire Aqualogic, when we believed that was our best option. We are now presented with a new, apparently more efficient and more effective

option of utilizing both hand-harvesting and limited, targeted use of herbicides. The alternative is to do nothing – which will result in further infestation, mats of milfoil in some areas, and reliance on individual property owners to control the weed in their own space.

*No, we have no regrets. We believe that we have kept the problem from getting as bad as the lakes who've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars.
(see <https://www.solitudelakemanagement.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Test-of-an-herbicide-for-Eurasian-Watermilfoil-shows-promise.pdf>) We believe that our constant vigilance has prevented significant growth. We believe that abandoning the fight will simply leave our children and grandchildren with a bigger problem in the future.*

40. Could we “pave” an approach to Greibsch [sic] with our mats?

The Milfoil team has discussed and will consider. We would need volunteers willing to help move the mats... fortunately they are in shallow water and do not require scuba gear. Willing and able-bodied volunteers are encouraged to contact anyone on the Board or Task Force!

41. There are plenty of reports stating the effectiveness but have there been studies on water quality years later?

We would refer you to the video available on the SLA website regarding the Lake George Park Commission explaining their decision to apply for a permit, including information about parts per million and parts per billion of this specific chemical that have been deemed safe in drinking water. Treatment for milfoil utilizes concentrations that would need to be multiplied by 400 before affecting drinking water for infants.

42. What criteria will be used to determine the next steps for the SLA developing a milfoil management plan?

(This question seems to be redundant and has been answered by many of the questions prior) the same criteria we have used in the past?

43. While every lake owner partakes of the recreational aspects of the lake many use lake water for washing, laundry, and sanitary uses. A few take water for drinking. Do those using lake water for drinking have a greater input in a decision to use herbicide?

The concerns of all of those who use Sylvia Lake's water for any purpose are valid, but from what the MTF has learned thus far about the effects of ProcellaCor, there is no danger to the quality of drinking water, especially after it dissipates within 24 hours.

All of the 155 Sylvia Lake property owners have an equal stake in preserving the health and well-being of the lake's water quality; if the use of an herbicide to mitigate our ever growing milfoil problem comes to a vote, each property owner will have one vote, as it has been in the past with regard to other issues such as elections of officers.

44 With respect to next steps (formal engagement with the Town of Fowler, a legal authority) How does the SLA Board propose to request and receive/develop a consensus opinion from the Sylvia Lake community?

Our plans for next steps include further research, and exploration of the use of herbicides, their effects and results, and then further subsequent education of the stakeholders and property owners. There will be a forum for discussion in the not too distant future before any decisions are made and a vote taken.

45. If, as a lake, we decide that chemicals are the best action, will that be decided by the SLA Board of Directors, or by consensus? Define consensus.

The word consensus has several interpretations. Webster's Dictionary defines the word as a general agreement, a judgment arrived at by most of those concerned, and group solidarity in sentiment and agreement. The SLA board cannot and will not decide on its own to proceed with a plan to utilize any chemical treatment of milfoil, without consent of a simple majority of stakeholders (Sylvia Lake property owners).

We are not yet at the point of collective yes or no decision to employ an integrated approach to managing our milfoil problem including the use of ProcellaCor. There are several steps on the way to its possible use, including an application to the DEC to even begin the permitting process.

46. How many camps are represented tonight (7/7 meeting)?

Approximately 28 of the 155 property owners were at the 7/7 meeting .

47. Dear Abby (aka SLA)

I'm a firm believer in modern technology and the use of pesticides and herbicides to enhance our quality of life. My neighbor and longtime friend(s) are more organic and opposed to chemical use. How do we resolve our differences and remain friends?

Surely Knot Alone

Dear Surely,

Our lake is a small and treasured community of neighbors, friends, and families. All of us, longtime lake residents and relative newcomers alike, love Sylvia Lake, and want to keep it healthy for now and the future. No one wants to harm the lake. Congenial, respectful relationships between all lake residents are VERY important to all of us. A difference of opinions can possibly be resolved by respectful discussion and the sharing of solid information and research. That said, there is no such thing as 100% consensus on ANY issue- environmental, political or religious.