

Invasive Species Annual Report to the Town of Caroga

December 13, 2023

1. 2023 Eurasian Water Milfoil Harvesting Season.

A. Total Eurasian Water Milfoil Bushels harvested from East and West Caroga Lake for 2023 were 1436 Bushels.

Total Bushels removed from East and West Caroga Lake for 2022 were 2149.

This resulted in a decrease of 713 Bushels from 2022.

Unfortunately, this decrease was not the result of less Eurasian Water Milfoil, rather multiple events occurring throughout the season that were unexpected and out of the program's control.

Overall the amount of Milfoil in both lakes remains very high with a noticeable increased growth in West Caroga Lake.

The factors that caused the decreased harvest included:

1. Mechanical failures of the Outboard motors used to propel the Harvester and Jon boat. Both motors had been in service for almost 15 years, used on a daily basis and had served the program well. They were replaced with new 20 HP motors, partly through a \$1,500.00 donation by the East Caroga Lake Environmental Association and Operating funds from Invasive Species program. Time lost was one week of Harvest time.
2. Fuel injector failure on the Harvesters Diesel engine caused multiple lost days.
3. Weather was the largest factor causing over 2 weeks of lost diving time. Heavy winds prevent secure anchoring of the harvester, pulling it away from the diving location and causing possible injury risk to those on the deck of the pontoon boat and offloading the Milfoil to the Jon boat.
4. Non-work-related Injuries to several divers, prevented them from working.
5. Several divers being unavailable for 2 weeks due to a non-work related commitment.

B. The Harvester, Jon Boat, motors, dump trailer and misc. items have been winterized and stored for the off season at the Town Hall.

C. The \$50,000.00 Grant Application for a Pilot program to try the Herbicide, **ProcellaCOR**, was approved by the Dept. of Environmental Conservation. There is a 10% matching fee required so \$5,000.00 of the grant is to be picked up by the town.

1. The Permit Application to the DEC is underway with the APA to follow, and are being handled by Glenn Sullivan of Ready-Scout LLC, an experienced and licensed Herbicide provider/applicator who will also be applying the ProcellaCOR.
2. The application is scheduled for late May early June depending on Milfoil growth. Monitoring of the lakes for adverse effects will continue until June 30th of 2025 which will complete the grant.

To date, follow up of lakes that have used ProcellaCOR have shown no negative effects to fish, native plant species, drinking water or swimmers/bathers. Some native plants species have minor discoloration for a week or 2 and then return to normal.

3. Permit requirements call for an informational letter (Attached) to be sent to all shoreline property owners including those adjacent to Caroga Creek as far as State Route 10A . The process of mailing is underway and is expected to be completed no later than Tuesday Dec 19th.

4. In preparation for the Pilot Program, the Town has conducted 2 Public forums to educate and allow for comments.

The 2nd Public forum included the Town Supervisors from Lake Luzerne and Lake Minerva, who were responsible for the use of PrecellaCOR in those lakes.

5. Mapping of the ProcellaCOR application locations, one in West Caroga and 3 in East Caroga were completed by Adirondack Institute and the final report provided to the town. This mapping is a requirement of the DEC which documents the extent of Milfoil in these areas.

D. In October, the town board approved the Invasive Species program to apply for a grant titled **Invasive Species Early Detection/Rapid Response and Control**. The application was for new equipment to allow for more accurate and faster identification of Milfoil and using GPS technology to retain the location of Milfoil in the software. This will allow for a rapid return to the location for removal or checking for regrowth. There are also funds to replace the existing motor on the Lake Management boat with one more suitable for the slow speed needed to search for Milfoil.

There were 2 questions in the grant that may disqualify us from going forward after its initial review.

1. **if we have a current active grant with the same activity, we may not be allowed to apply.** I have already had a conversation with the Grant Director stating the ProcellaCOR grant activity is for the removal of Eurasian Milfoil while activity in this grant is to rapidly identify and permanently locate the Milfoil. She did not comment for or against my reasoning which gives some hope.

2. **If you have been removing Milfoil for more than 3 years, you are not eligible for this grant.**

Obviously, with a 30 year history of the program it would appear to be an automatic disqualification. However, I felt it was important to continue the application because if this is the rationale for denial, I intend to use the Appeal process for an explanation of why we are being denied the opportunity to help improve our ability to remove a very devastating invasive species we have been fighting for 30+ years.

I am sure they are trying to help lakes with new invasions of Eurasian Milfoil before they become like our lakes and while that may seem appropriate, to earmark every dollar in that direction, to me is not appropriate.

If nothing else, they may realize the importance of creating a grant for those lakes with a long history of Milfoil.

E. Looking forward to 2024, the ability to retain / recruit divers and tenders is foremost. I have been approached by 2 property Owners in Caroga Lake who are certified divers and looking to work this summer. I am currently in the process of confirming who will be returning from 2023 and believe we will need these 2 residents. In the past, we had a diver who could train and certify new divers, but he will not be returning along with one other. Having these 2 potential divers available will be a big help.

With a full workforce, good weather, no major mechanical issues and the pilot program, optimistic for a successful season.

Respectfully Submitted

Walter Hogan

Director Invasive Species Program