

Fund Seeks Donors Who Will “Adopt A Bay” to Control Milfoil

By Paul Post

SPECIAL TO THE LAKE GEORGE MIRROR

A Lake George environmental group is asking residents to “Adopt a Bay” to help win the war against Eurasian water milfoil, the most prevalent of five invasive plant and animal species currently impacting the lake.

The Fund for Lake George has hired Au Sable Forks-based Aquatic Invasive Species Management

LLC, whose divers in 2014 hand-harvested more than 74,500 pounds of milfoil in the first year of an aggressive three-year program to bring the nuisance plant under control.

“The goal is not eradication,” said Eric Siy, the Fund’s executive director. “It’s to establish lower maintenance levels.”

The effort is patterned after the one done previously at Upper Saranac Lake from 2004-07. In the

first year of that program, divers worked approximately 14,000 hours to remove more than 40,000 pounds of milfoil

However, from 2008-14, divers have worked fewer than 5,000 hours each year to extract less than 5,000 pounds of milfoil, indicating that the initial investment made maintenance much less costly in the long run.

“The harder we hit back, the more effective it will be,” said Chris Navitsky, the Fund’s Lake George

Waterkeeper program leader.

Year one of the Lake George program cost the Fund about \$140,000. Eighty percent of the milfoil harvested was from five specific areas - Dunhams, Harris, Huddle and Warner bays and the village of Lake George basin.

The Fund expects to spend about \$166,000 this year, but is making an appeal to lake residents, whom they hope will contribute about half of this amount. The Lake George Park

Commission is providing \$150,000 this year, too.

“The more money we raise, the longer divers can stay in the water,” Siy said.

Last year’s program involved one three-person team - two divers and a third person on the surface - who worked well into autumn. With increased funding, a second three-person team can be hired, basically doubling last year’s efforts, Siy said.

Last summer, Lake George adopted a first-of-its-kind mandatory boat inspection program to prevent invasive species from entering the lake.

“We’ve closed the doors,” Siy said. “Now we’ve got to clean up what’s in the lake. Harvesting is the second part of a double-barreled, two-fisted strategy.”

Milfoil harvesting in Lake George is done strictly by hand, as divers pull plants up by their roots. No chemicals or mechanical harvesters are used, tactics that have been employed elsewhere, such as Saratoga Lake.

Eurasian watermilfoil forms thick, heavy mats near the surface that entangle boat propellers and clog swimming areas.

In addition to milfoil’s environmental and recreational impacts, Siy said heavy infestations can reduce property values by up to 20 percent. “So there’s a personal investment here,” he said. “By contributing, people are protecting their properties.”

The other four invasive species currently found in Lake George are Asian clams, zebra mussels, curly leaf pondweed and the spiny water flea, for which

The Fund is asking individuals and corporations to make donations ranging from \$50 to \$5,000 for “Adopt a Bay.”

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First of Ben’s Book Stations Unveiled

By Carl Ciccarelli

The first of several Ben’s Book Stations, book kiosks named in honor of Ben Osborn, the Lake George graduate who died in combat while serving with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan in 2010, was unveiled in Ushers Park on June 16.

The kiosks, which contain books for children and young adults that may be borrowed, kept or exchanged at no cost, is a project of the Ben Osborn Memorial Fund, a regional non-profit organization that supports children in need.

The mission of the Ben Osborn Fund “is to lift up kids,” a mission that includes encouraging children to read, said Bill Osborn, Osborn’s father and the founder of the fund.

“There are so many different ways to support kids; we support ten local food pantries and help families with kids,” said Osborn. “This literacy initiative will teach kids that reading can be such a pleasurable experience. It will get books into hands of kids in the easiest possible way.”

At the June 16 ceremony, Osborn discussed the origins of the project.

Osborn said the idea for the kiosks came to him “like a lot of my ideas; at 3 in the morning.”

Osborn approached Lake George High School Principal Francis Coccozza and municipal leaders with the idea for the kiosks and they responded enthusiastically, he said.

Lake George Village employees have donated designs for the kiosks,

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