

The Post-Journal

The Proposal From The Bemus Bay Property Owners Is Worth Hearing

Owners of homes in Bemus Bay purchased homes there because they wanted to be able to enjoy Chautauqua Lake; they want to be able to use their boat or jet ski, to play fetch with their dog on the shore of the lake and perhaps wade into the lake on a hot day. At the very least, they want to be able to sit on the lakeshore and watch the sun set.

None of that is possible right now. Homeowners describe a big enough weed problem that access to the lake from their homes has been choked off. Even worse, they say weed fragments accumulate near the shore and on the shallow lake bottom. As those fragments rot, they form a foul-smelling sludge that is noticeable far from the lake's shores. In addition to the smell, the homeowners say they have had the sludge tested and found traces of blue-green algae with cyanobacteria.

Rather than complain about the conditions and expect someone else to solve the problem, some of the homeowners formed the Bemus Bay Property Owners and are raising money to apply herbicide to a two-mile area of shoreline affecting roughly 650 shoreline property owners. The homeowners should be commended for doing more than making a stink. They have spent

their time and money coming up with a reasoned, rational and researched plan to deal with what they see as a problem. What began as a small group discussion between a few neighbors has now grown to more than 150 active members of a group known as the Bemus Bay Property Owners, an organization which has now merged with the Chautauqua Lake Partnership. The town of Ellery and village of Bemus Point have signed on to support an effort to get Department of Environmental Conservation permits for an application of the herbicides Navigate and Aquathol-K to 55 acres of shoreline that ranges roughly from Long Point State Park to the Village Casino. The property owners also want to devise a better method of shoreline cleanup to better dispose of the rotting weeds that seem to congregate on the shorelines of Bemus Bay.

The proposed Bemus Bay herbicide application is one of dozens of efforts to improve the quality of Chautauqua Lake. Neither weed harvesting, herbicide use nor deployment of weed-eating weevils should have exclusive domain as the chosen weed control technique on the lake. To the credit of the many organizations working to improve the lake, many methods have been used over the years. Now, then, is a good time to remind everyone of the need to be open-minded about the Bemus Bay property owners' proposal. If they can raise the money and the DEC approves permits for the herbicide use, then the herbicide use should happen.

Indiscriminate herbicide use on Chautauqua Lake makes no sense. Targeted applications of the right herbicides that remove a nuisance for property owners and help lakefront businesses take advantage of the summer season should at least be considered both by the DEC and by possible funders.

COMMENTS