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Nonprofit Group Seeks To Improve Chautauqua Lake

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A nonprofit lake group is striving to improve Chautauqua Lake's water quality through small, localized projects.

The Chautauqua Lake Partnership Inc. formed in 2002 and recently converged with members of the Bemus Bay Property Owners group to tackle the issue of water quality — specifically in Bemus Bay. The group has established a 2017 work program in support of improvements to Chautauqua Lake, which includes weed management through herbicide treatment and near shore/shoreline cleanup demonstration projects.

Jim Cirbus, president and Bemus Point resident, said the goal is to improve the quality of

lake water to allow for more desirable boating, fishing and dining experiences. Cirbus said Bemus Bay is a microcosm of Chautauqua Lake between Long Point State Park, lake homes, the beach and businesses that rely on tourist traffic.

"It seems like a perfect place to have demonstration project on herbicide application and also some new techniques in terms of cleaning near shore and shoreline from rotting vegetation and debris," Cirbus said. "It's a demonstration project in our local area. We hope it's successful."

Cirbus said the herbicide treatment method is one a few that's include in the Macrophyte Management Study, which he says the Chautauqua Lake Partnership helped fund. The town of Ellery and village of Bemus Point are backing the idea as they've joined

to submit applications to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for approval of herbicide treatment. Cirbus said the two municipalities are funding the permit.

"That gives us a lot more credibility when municipalities step up," Cirbus said, adding they're also working with the county. "We also have a grant in with state Sen. Cathy Young to fund the demonstration project."

In conjunction with the submission, the group says around 650 shoreline property owners in Bemus Bay and its vicinity have been formally notified of the plan and were provided an opportunity to request additional information.

The group says the treatment is a one-day operation and is being targeted between mid-May and June. Lake residents and users will be notified of plans and tim-

ing prior to treatment.

"We hope it's successful," Cirbus said. "If it is, we hope to lend our expertise and organization to other areas of the lake. The lake is so different. It has to be a localized specific arrangement for each community."

The Chautauqua Lake Partnership says they're also looking to pursue a near shore and shoreline cleanup demonstration project to remove weed fragments and rotted weed sludge.

The group is seeking funding for its 2017 program to improve the lake. The group can be contacted at info@chautauqualakepartners.com for additional information and contributions.

"We're all volunteers. We have different jobs and we're doing this for the good of the community and the lake," Cirbus said.