

Invasive plant could spread more in lake



Coventry Town Manager John Elsesser talks about the hydrilla in Coventry Lake during a forum Tuesday at the Coventry Town Hall Annex.

Michelle Firestone | Staff

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COVENTRY — Hydrilla has already spread quite a bit through Coventry Lake and it could spread even further.

Therefore, a lakewide treatment of the invasive plant should be done as soon as possible.

That message was delivered during an informational forum about the town's proposed lake treatment plan in the town hall annex Tuesday evening.

"There are concerns that it will spread from our lake to other places," said Coventry Town Manager John Elsesser.

The lake was treated twice for hydrilla, in 2016 and 2017, and,



R. Michael Payton, left, supervisor of the Navigation and Boating Infrastructure Unit of the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's boating division, talks about state boating regulations as Peter Aarrestad, director of DEEP's fisheries division, looks on. Michelle Firestone | Staff

according to a report from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the treatment was not as effective as hoped.

Since then, hydrilla has spread

throughout the lake, leading to the recommendation that a lakewide treatment be conducted.

"It's fairly rare in Connecticut,"

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said Elsesser, noting hydrilla has been found in the Connecticut River and some private bodies of water.

The treatment is estimated to cost \$123,000, with the state kicking in about \$60,000 and the town kicking in the rest.

The town council recently authorized the use of \$95,000 from the budget, funds for both this year's treatment and some for next year's treatment.

If the town endorses the proposed plan, the treatment would be done by SOLitude Lake Management of Shrewsbury, Mass., a company the state is contracted with.

The plan is to begin the treatment by July 15, with some noting the treatment would not be as effective if it is started after that date.

Keith Gazaille, SOLitude director of lake management for the north and mid-Atlantic regions, said the proposed treatment involves "Sonar One," a fluridone product that would cause the plants to turn white, rendering them unable to photosynthesize.

Fluridone is an aquatic herbicide.

"There are multiple formulations," Gazaille said. "Sonar One is a pellet formulation."

A permit would need to be acquired from the DEEP for



Robert Kortmann, Coventry's lake consultant, educates the public about hydrilla in Coventry Lake during a forum at the town hall annex Tuesday. Michelle Firestone | Staff

the treatment to occur.

In addition to killing hydrilla, participants at the forum said the treatment would also kill milfoil, another invasive plant.

Elsesser said there is still some discussion about the dosage being used.

"The town has not fully endorsed the treatment plan at this point," he said.

Eastern Highlands Health District Director Robert

Miller said he did research about the proposed treatment and doesn't see any potential danger to people.

Invasive plant fragments can be carried on watercraft and signs are posted at the boat launch about how to properly deal with that.

R. Michael Payton, a supervisor in the boating division of the DEEP's Navigation and Boating Infrastructure Unit, said it's important "neighbors

are aware of these situations and how they could be transporting it."

He said informational pamphlets could be sent to people living around the lake.

Robert Kortmann, a limnologist who has been studying Coventry Lake for decades, said he recommended when the hydrilla was first found that it be treated with fluridone, a systemic herbicide, rather than a contact herbicide.

A University of Connecticut biology class discovered hydrilla at Coventry Lake in 2015.

The first two treatments were done with a contact herbicide.

"I didn't think the contact herbicides would be particularly effective, mainly because of the life stages of the plant," Kortmann said.

According to the Penn State Extension system website, while contact herbicides kill only the plant parts contacted by the chemical, systemic herbicides are absorbed by the roots or foliage and moved through the plant.

"The plant grows really fast," said Kortmann. "It grows 5 to 6 inches a day sometimes."

The forum will be rebroadcast and the footage can be accessed via the town website, www.coventryct.org, charter and YouTube.

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