

DOWNTURN IN FISHING CAUSES CONCERN

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August 10, 2011

CAZENOVIA, NEW YORK - There has been a great deal of discussion about weed control in Cazenovia Lake and the results of a two-year program to eradicate the growth of Eurasian milfoil. In many parts of the lake, Eurasian milfoil growth has been reduced or eliminated, and the lake water (aided I'm sure by a healthy population of zebra mussels) is as clear as I can remember.

However, the picture is not all rosy.

Areas of the north end of the lake, which have not been treated in two years, are now showing significant new milfoil growth. The water in front of the camps along Overlook Terrace and Lakewood Way is now as congested with weeds as it ever has been. The milfoil is returning with a vengeance.

Of even great concern is the downturn in the fishing. For most of my life, I've fished the lake with regularity. My father has charted every fish he's caught in the lake in the past 20-plus years, during which he's fished in Cazenovia at least weekly and often much more. Significant declines in both the size and the number of largemouth bass began last summer and have continued through this season. Others who regularly fish the lake have similar stories. Coupled with significant fishkill event last summer, which left hundreds of bass and other fish dead for unknown reasons, this is cause for concern.

Other than timing, there is nothing necessarily to tie the poor fishing to the introduction of the herbicide. However, the timing is undeniable.

I applaud the efforts of the Cazenovia Lake Association and the Lake Watershed Council to maintain the health of the lake and keep the growth of invasive species in check. During my 40 years, I've witnessed the rocky shoals along the eastern shore become engulfed in weeds and muck. What once were grassy bays on the western side of the lake became unboatable, unswimmable and unfishable swamps. Relief from the weeds is desirable and appreciated.

However, for each action comes an equal and opposite reaction.

As these organizations continue to research the impact of current and past efforts, I would urge them to also study the health of the fish populations in the lake.

