

Chemical treatment of Salem pond postponed

Salem residents worry about water contamination

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com

SALEM — Public concern about using chemicals to kill invasive plants in Arlington Pond has halted the project.

Town Manager Keith Hickey told selectmen this week residents questions about the impact has prompted of the Arlington Pond Protective Association to hold off on herbicide treatment.

“Where we stand now is the project is on hold until next year,” Hickey said.

The work by Aquatic Control Technology of Sutton, Mass., was postponed after concerns were voiced earlier this month that the herbicides could contaminate the pond and private wells.

Arlington Pond and Canobie Lake are the town’s two major sources for drinking water.

Hickey and association president Howie Glynn have said the state Department of Environmental Services backs the project and the treatment would not affect drinking water.

The association has applied for a matching grant from the DES to pay for the nearly \$22,000 project. The plan calls for treating approximately 25 acres of the 238-acre pond with two herbicides, Clipper and Reward, to combat spiny naiad and fanwort.

It would have been the first time the pond has been chemically treated because the weeds have become a nuisance, according to Glynn. Weeds have not been removed from the pond since it was excavated in the 1980s, he said.

Glynn declined to comment on the postponement, referring all questions to Hickey.

After Aquatic Control Technology sent letters about the work to Arlington Pond residents in early April, Phil Smith of Nowell Court became upset.

Smith told selectmen he was worried about what could happen to the water. The company’s notice to abutters asked them to contact the firm if their wells are within 50 feet of the water.

“To put a foreign substance in the water may have some effect on the well,” he said. “Most of the wells on Arlington Pond are less than 50 feet.”

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Smith was also concerned he didn't receive notification from the town and said his neighbors may not know about the planned use of herbicides.

Since then, other residents have raised questions about the project. Smith could not be reached for comment on the postponement.

That's why the association has decided to hold meetings with neighbors to outline the project, Hickey said Tuesday.

"Their concerns should be minimized," he said. "In some cases, it was the first time they were hearing about it."

Selectmen's Chairman Patrick Hargreaves said he was also concerned about how the herbicides could affect drinking water.

The association has agreed to reimburse the town for expenses already spent on the project, but it's a minimal amount, Hickey said. The one-day treatment was scheduled for July.

The state would pay for 40 percent of the work and the association's more than 300 members would fund the remainder. Aquatic Control representatives are to meet with town officials before any treatment begins.

Clipper and Reward contain the chemicals flumioxazin and Diquat, respectively. Testing on rats has shown flumioxazin can led to reproductive organ abnormalities, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Excessive levels of Diquat in drinking water can cause cataracts over many years, the EPA said.

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