

An diver places benthic barriers to eradicate Asian clams. Photo by Emily DeBolt.

Lake George Launches Attack on Invasive Clams

By Anthony F. Hall

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First discovered in Lake George last August, Asian clams could be eliminated from the lake by the start of this summer.

A \$350,000 dollar eradication effort will begin in April, the Lake George Asian Clam Rapid Response Task Force has announced.

“We believe this effort will greatly reduce the numbers of these invasive clams to the point where they can be eradicated with subsequent treatments, or eliminated altogether,” said Dr. Sandra Nierzwicki-Bauer, director of the Darrin Fresh Water Institute and a member of the Task Force.

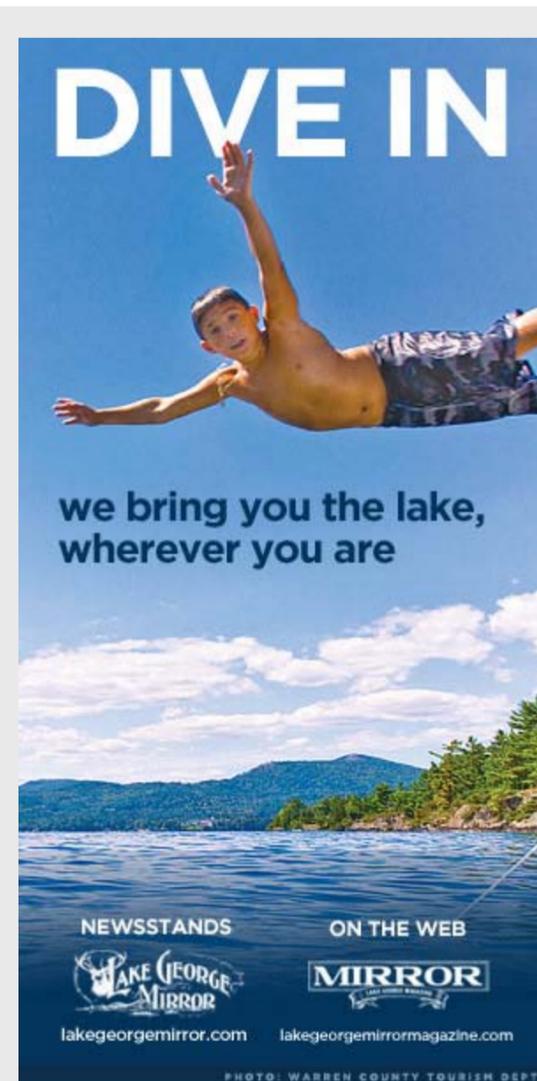
According to Nierzwicki-Bauer, benthic barriers will be installed across a 3.25 acre area in Lake George Village where the infestation is largely

concentrated.

“Benthic barriers will cut off oxygen supplies and suffocate the clams over a 45-day treatment period,” said Nierzwicki-Bauer.

The Task Force conducted a pilot study last fall to determine the best method of eradicating the clams.

“The goal of the pilot project was to assess four different mat types, and based on effectiveness, cost and ease of installation and maintenance, we selected the type of benthic mat that will be used this



spring,” said Nierzwicki-Bauer.

“Without proper experimental design, data collection, and analysis, we would have been taking an educated guess at what to do, based on experiences in other lakes,” said Nierzwicki-Bauer. “It was therefore important to spend the time and money on the pilot study.”

In addition to installing benthic mats, the Task Force will also employ suction harvesting, removing clams from another 2.58 acres. In all, 5.23 acres will be treated for Asian clams.

“It’s likely that this 5-acre infestation started only a few years ago with a few clams in a bait bucket, in a fish tank, or transported on a boat, trailer or construction equipment. We’ll be probing the area throughout the treatment time to try and locate satellite populations and treat these,” said Peter Bauer, a member of the Task Force and the executive director of The Fund for Lake George.

According to Task Force member and Lake George Association executive director Walt Lender, suction harvesting will be used near seawalls, beaches, boat launches and docks.

Nierzwicki-Bauer said that the process of suction harvesting will be completed by mid-May, so as to minimize any inconvenience to local residents and business owners.

The area where the Asian clams are concentrated is located near one of the lake’s busiest commercial strips.

Lender noted the area contains more than 750 motel rooms and cottages and more than 150 boat slips, but added that the eradication effort should not disrupt business.

“We’ve already met with half a dozen property owners; we listened to their concerns, and we’ll do everything we can to accommodate those concerns,” said Lender. “We also explained the plan, which was well-received. Everyone wants to do what’s best for the lake.”

The Task Force will provide signs explaining the eradication project to motel guests and boaters with instructions in how to avoid interfering with its success, Lender said.

According to Nierzwicki-Bauer, the eradication effort had to begin before the lake’s temperature rises and the clams reproduce.

“If treatment were delayed until the fall, it’s likely that the treatment area would be 20 to 33% larger than it is now, as two new breeding cycles would have been completed by then,” said Nierzwicki-Bauer.

“We’re optimistic that we have a good plan to eradicate this invader, but our margin of error is small,” said Peter Bauer.



Tags: Asian Clams, Darren Fresh Water Institute, Invasive Species, Invasives, Lake George Asian Clam Rapid Response Task Force, Lake George Association, Lake George Invasives, LGA, Peter Bauer, Sandra Nierzwicki-Bauer, The Fund for Lake George, Walt Lender

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