

Frost to kill Stockbridge Bowl's weeds

By Clarence Fanto, Berkshire Eagle Staff

Posted: 01/04/2012 12:05:32 AM EST

Updated: 01/04/2012 12:29:26 PM EST

Wednesday January 4, 2012

STOCKBRIDGE -- After 25 years of weed infestation and encroachment by Eurasian milfoil, Stockbridge Bowl is getting a \$1 million cleanup.

It's a major project just under way that will climax in a 51 2-foot drawdown of the 400-acre lake next fall which will expose up to 20 feet of its perimeter. The goal is to allow a killing frost to snuff out the roots of the pesky weeds that have bedeviled swimmers, kayakers, sailors, Josh Billings Runaround canoers, and small-craft operators since the 1980s.

If all goes according to plan, the lake will be pristine by spring of 2013.

The project is supported by donations from the Stockbridge Bowl Association, which has nearly 400 members, as well as funding from the town, the Community Preservation Act, and the state Department of Environment Protection.

The state owns the lake and the town manages it with the association's consultation and assistance, said Cris Raymond, a past president of the group.

"After Walden Pond, it's probably the most-prominent, high-profile lake in the state," she said. Raymond pointed out the its proximity of Tanglewood and Kripalu, both of which maintain beaches on the Bowl.

According to Richard Seltzer, the association president and a resident of the lake's shorefront, the project is similar to cleanup efforts on other Berkshire waterbodies, including Onota Lake in Pittsfield, Cheshire Lake, Goose Pond in Lee and Tyringham, and Lake

Advertisement

Garfield in Monterey.

Seltzer called the kickoff of the work "a great milestone."

"We've been staring at the weeds every summer, giving them a haircut with a weed harvester, but this is an extirpation for several years," he said.

The drawdown will be an annual event in order to achieve a permanent cure through an effective killing frost ahead of snow cover, Seltzer said.

The drawdown, which is far more extensive than previous efforts, requires the installation of a 255-foot concrete drainpipe in the outlet portion of the Bowl, originally known as Lake Mahkeenac.

Project Manager Robert Crosky, who was supervising site preparations Tuesday on an access road off Interlaken Crossroad at the southern end of the lake, said he expects no hitches for the "well-conceived project."

George R. Cairns & Sons Inc., a contracting firm from Windham, N.H., expects to complete the drainpipe installation by late March.

"It should be on time and on budget," said Crosky, who was hired by the town and the Stockbridge Bowl Association to oversee the work.

Crosky has supervised the renovation of the former Plain School into the Town Offices and the town's water line upgrade. He also has overseen repairs at the Mount Greylock War Memorial as well as the decade-long conversion of the former Sprague Electric plant in North Adams to Mass MoCA.

"This is what we've been working toward for 15 years," said Seltzer. "This has been like climbing Mount Everest for us, and reaching the top is a great success. It's a tremendous accomplishment of historic proportions and represents a pulling-together of the town, the Select Board and the [Stockbridge] Bowl Association members."

The project, which got under way in mid-December, marks the first phase of the town's lake management plan, adopted at the 1996 town meeting.

The drawdown pipe, four feet in diameter, is to be installed below three Tenneco gas pipelines and a town sewer line. The company is overseeing the work.

"Since the 1950s, the lines have restricted the natural outflow of water from Stockbridge Bowl," said Town Administrator Jorja-Ann Marsden.

The project required review and approval by state regulatory agencies and the town's Conservation Commission.

A second phase of the cleanup encompasses removal of a massive amount of silt in four sections of the lake, including areas near the town beach.

By the numbers

Here's a breakdown of the costs and funding for the Stockbridge Bowl weed-removal project:

Stockbridge Bowl Association contributions: \$250,000

State DEP CleanWater Act: \$247,000

Stockbridge & state: Community Preservation Act, \$230,000

Town of Stockbridge support: \$200,000 (approx.)

Tenneco initial funding: \$68,000

Total cost: \$1 million.

Note: The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission assisted with coordination and fundraising. In addition to the \$615,000 contract with Cairns & Sons, the \$1 million total includes fees for consulting engineers, planners, legal expenses, costs associated with regulatory hearings, fees for architectural engineering and town supervision.

Sources: Stockbridge Bowl Association; town of Stockbridge.