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Three years and 22 tons later, milfoil still plagues Upper Saranac

By MIKE LYNCH, Enterprise Staff Writer

SARANAC LAKE — In the last three years, more than 22 tons of the invasive species milfoil has been removed from Upper Saranac Lake, Curt Stiles told the state Adirondack Park Agency on Thursday.

“We turned the clock back 10 years, but the real challenge is what we see ahead of us,” said Stiles, president of the Upper Saranac Lake Foundation.

In 2004, 18 tons of milfoil was removed, followed by 4.5 tons last year and less than 500 pounds this year, Stiles said.

The majority of the invasive plant was manually removed by divers, who numbered as many 20 to 30 per summer.

But Stiles emphasized that by no means is the project finished.

“Each summer you’ll go back and catch something you didn’t find before,” Stiles said.

Areas like those near the state-run Fish Creek Campground are especially troublesome because there is so much traffic through the area, Stiles said. Boats are prone to carry invasive species between bodies of water.

“Your public campsites are a huge part of the problem,” Stiles said.

Stiles said \$1.5 million, mainly raised by private donations, has been used in the last three years to combat the problem. He estimated it will cost about \$150,000 annually to keep milfoil at its current levels.

The milfoil removal program is a joint effort by the Watershed Institute at Paul Smith’s College, the Darrin Fresh Water Institute, the APA, state Department of Conservation, the Adirondack Council, Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks and the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program.

On the net: www.uslf.org.