

The Real Costs of Controlling Milfoil on Lake Bomoseen

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Posted to: Castleton Hubbardton

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Discussion

In the ongoing discussion about possible use of a chemical to control Milfoil in our lake, many people have asked why alternative methods, such as Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting, (DASH), Benthic Barriers and/or Mechanical Harvesting aren't sufficient. Here are the facts:

All DASH permits limit homeowners to 1500sf maximum around their shorelines. LBPT DASH services have averaged between \$600 and \$1100 per lakefront, depending on how many square feet are cleared (very few get full 1500sf max pulled). Given 43,560 sf per acre, a maximum of 29 lakefronts per acre could be cleared at a cost range of \$17,400 per acre (at \$600/lakefront) to \$31,900 per acre (at \$1100/lakefront).

Benthic Barriers are much more expensive. Assuming \$300 install/removal fee and \$440 commercial cost of two 10x30' barriers (for only 600sf coverage), it would cost \$740 for 600 sf or \$1480 for 1200sf. With 43,560 sf per acre, that equates to about \$54,000 per acre (73 parcels of 600 sf each, or 36 parcels of 1200sf each).

Neither estimate includes the permitted allowance for "navigation lanes." For example, if the LBA decided to use DASH to open up a navigation lane in just 3 critical boating areas (one-quarter mile long by 20 feet wide for two boats to pass=26,400 square feet or .6 acre each), the cost alone would range between about \$31,320 to \$57420 (3x .6 acre=1.8 acre).

(This of course, all assumes there would be enough divers with

enough time to pull almost 2 acres of EWM. It took the LBPT's 2 divers 10 days to do 14 properties averaging 1000 sf. each, so 43,560 sf would take them roughly 31 days (43,560 divided by 1400sf/day) just to do the navigation lanes). (The cost for this same area using Mechanical Harvesting on a fee for service basis would be about \$17,000 per acre--see below).

Mechanical Harvesting is also very expensive, with a typical lakefront (e.g. 15' x 100') costing anywhere from \$400-\$800 (with or without public subsidies) and beyond, as there is no limit to either the size of the area cut or the number of times the harvester may return. However, mechanical harvesting typically cuts only 2-3 feet of the upper milfoil, which means that there is a high likelihood of the plant growing back to original crowning height after 2-3 weeks. Finally, mechanical harvesting is least likely to access the very shore areas which are most desirable for swimming etc., with limitations placed on the movement of the harvester by boat docks, floats, and obstructive underwater features (e.g. boulders, anchoring blocks, water intake structures, etc.).

As a practical indicator of how expensive these services are to the average lakefront homeowner, only 14 people signed up for DASH in 2021, with an additional 8 people using Benthic Barriers. Similarly, only approximately 50-75 persons have hired mechanical harvester services on Lake Bomoseen when offered on a fee for service basis.

For more facts on this discussion, please go to the LBPT website, or visit us on Facebook.