

Hello to all,

I hope all of you and your families have had a healthy winter and that this summer will be one of your best ever. I'm writing here to update on developments with the Chinese mystery snail harvest.

This message is nearly identical to the one I sent to the SPIA Board of Directors. I've received positive responses from Pres. Bill Kilgus and many of the other directors and now am sharing with you:

Recapping briefly: Last year we set an early July harvest date. We also had an early ice-out and unseasonably early lake warming, which led to June birthing by the female snails. The harvest was postponed due to the presence of these unseeable newborn snails, whom harvesters then could transport in water droplets to other parts of the lake and inadvertently spread the infestation. Harvesting was scheduled for later in the summer, when the juveniles would be buried in the substrate. Unfortunately, our later summer harvest was cancelled due to multiple circumstances that affected the availability of half our dive team, including one of the two professional divers we were depending on for underwater coordination and safety.

This year's strategy is different - both simplified and sustainable. Last year the project's organizational and coordination time was extensive, and there's no guarantee this year that it wouldn't have to be rescheduled for these or other changing circumstances. This spring I have been communicating with a diving instructor who has a diving business in Portland and also lives on a lake. He and a group of certified divers dive regularly throughout the season, and they would like to help us.

They will not charge a fee and just ask reimbursement for gas and cylinder fills, which at present will be under \$100. They have everything they will need, including large catch sacks for collecting the snails. The team will start in early morning and be finished in the afternoon. They will provide for their own safety as they do in other lakes. They also will provide a statement for SPIA that indemnifies the lake association from any liability for this undertaking.

SPIA will have the onshore responsibility to dispose of the snails, which will require a truck, a driver and a site for dumping. The State has requested we weigh the collected snails and provide harvest details, which I have agreed to do.

In all facets of the project at this time, I believe this is the best approach for us. These divers are either professionals or people who dive regularly, not just a few to zero times a year. They all are comfortable moving beyond the shallows into thirty plus feet of water and are equipped to search for additional snails in that darker water. Even more importantly, all these divers have the knowledge and experience to maintain a high level of safety.

Two of the divers will be at the lake this week for a site visit and exploratory dive. I will be in touch with Pres. Bill about that meeting and the harvest scheduling date, which will be soon.

Thank you to all you wonderful helpers for your interest, support, willingness to do whatever needed to be done, and for your understanding, too. I hope the time never comes when we will be called again to defend our beautiful lake from an invasive species. However, if that should happen, it is good for all of us to know that there are many, many among us who will join together to meet that need whatever it is.

Square Pond surveying for invasive aquatic species continues each year. If any of you are interested in helping by becoming familiar with your shoreline, I hope you will contact me. You do not have to know any plant names or other scientific data, and it only involves a few minutes several times a summer, for instance occasionally when you are out there walking the shore with your morning coffee. The main idea is simple: 1) to be familiar with your shore, so you recognize when something new or unfamiliar appears there and 2) to have contact info for knowledgeable lake neighbors you can call, who will come to identify it. It would be great for the lake if you would help in this small way.

With much appreciation to you all,

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