

# New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

## Office of Natural Resources, Region 3

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Alexander B. Grannis  
Commissioner

July 29, 2008

Dear Riparian Property Owner:

On June 25, 2008 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC, Department) sent all known riparian property owners along Ridgebury Lake and Catlin Creek downstream to the Route 6 crossing a letter explaining proposed action to eradicate the Northern Snakehead (*Channa argus*) from these waters. On July 8, 2008, a public meeting at the Town of Wawayanda Hall was also held to provide information regarding the proposed treatment of these waters with the fish toxicant Prentfish. Department staff provided information about the life history of this aggressive invasive species and the potential ramifications should this species continue to infest Ridgebury Lake and spread to waters downstream such as the Wallkill and Hudson Rivers.

At the conclusion of the Department presentations the meeting was opened for questions and comments. Additional written comments were accepted until July 16. The Department wishes to thank all who attended the information session, provided comments, questions and suggestions or who otherwise responded. The concerns regarding serious impacts from this invasive fish, and the concerns and questions regarding potential health, environmental and other impacts from the proposed response, including the use an aquatic pesticide that has rotenone as it's active ingredient, are understandable.

As a result of comments and suggestions made, some revisions in the Northern Snakehead eradication plan have been made to address the concerns expressed. While some comments opposed the treatment, others were in support. This Department understands the resistance to eliminating the fish population in Ridgebury Lake and Catlin Creek. However, the indigenous fishes inhabiting these waters plus the natural communities and waters of the Wallkill and Hudson are likely to be severely impacted by Northern Snakeheads if this population is left unchecked. The National Management Plan for the Northern Snakehead calls for eradication of Snakeheads if at all possible. After considering all available options, including no action and attempts to contain the invasive fish, DEC concluded that reclaiming the area of concern with a registered pesticide is the most assured and appropriate action that can be taken to halt the expansion of this invasive species and protect and restore this important resource. The impending damage to Ridgebury Lake and Catlin Creek, and potential for statewide impacts to aquatic resources are too great for any lesser action. DEC is making a commitment to follow the treatment with restocking and restoration. And DEC plans to use a different aquatic pesticide than originally proposed (see below) to eliminate some of the other impacts people were concerned with.

An outline of DEC's plan is attached, and includes the following changes and clarifications to the original proposal:

- ▶ **Lake Restoration** - Concerns about how fish populations in the treated area will be restored are understandable. The DEC will selectively remove and hold some fish collected from Ridgebury Lake prior to treatment and return them shortly after treatment, when the water is safe. The reintroduction of these fish will help accelerate natural restoration processes. DEC will work with the community, providing the technical support needed to develop and monitor the restoration of this fishery, and will support additional future restocking as determined by a cooperative effort between the community and the Department.

- ▶ **Odor** - Several comments were received regarding the odor associated with Prenfish. Department staff have researched the use of an alternative fish toxicant, CFT Legumine that has no to very little odor. This product also has far fewer undesirable inert ingredients while still being an effective eradication tool. Therefore Ridgebury Lake and Catlin Creek will be treated with CFT Legumine (product label enclosed). The active ingredient, Rotenone, is the same in Prenfish and CFT Legumine.
- ▶ **Fish carcass** - DEC will make every effort to remove the dead fish after treatment. A cleanup crew with trucks and equipment will be on site at the beginning of the operation and will continue the collection effort throughout the week or longer if necessary. Northern Snakeheads will be collected for analysis and all other fish will be transported to the New York State Department of Transportation's Highland composting facility.
- ▶ **Well contamination** - Several residents expressed concerns that drinking water wells adjacent to the treatment area could be negatively affected. DEC and Department of Health staff have reviewed available information on possible impacts to ground water from CFT Legumine. Based upon the information obtained there appears to be no cause for concern that any of the ingredients in CFT Legumine would threaten groundwater. Comprehensive results from a risk analysis study can be found at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lakedavis/enviro-docs/ScreeningLevelAnalysis/ScreeningLevelAnalysis.pdf> Further discussion on this topic can also be found in the attached Response to Comments.

DEC anticipates that the treatment will occur between August 4 and August 15, 2008. Some preparatory work could start earlier. Prior notification of the exact dates of treatment will be provided by posting of shorelines.

The following activities will be prohibited in the affected waters during periods of treatment and for up to 30 days after, as will be posted:

- Swimming and bathing
- Fishing and/or fish consumption
- Livestock watering
- Irrigation or spraying of agricultural crops
- Use of treated surface water for human consumption
- Use of treated surface water for domestic purposes

Attached are responses to comments that were received during the public meeting on July 8 and subsequent comment period that ended on July 16, 2008. Also attached find an outline of the treatment plan and a label for CFT Legumine. This information, including any updates or corrections, will also be posted on DEC's website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/607.html> . If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at the number above or Regional Fisheries Manager Michael Flaherty at 845-256-3066.

Sincerely,

William Rudge  
Natural Resource Supervisor

cc: W. Janeway, NYS DEC  
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