Oakland council to consider Belgrade's renewed call on neighbors to battle milfoil

Letter says a regional strategy is needed to take on the invasive weed that is threatening area lakes

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OAKLAND — Battling invasive milfoil in the Belgrade Lakes is too big of a job for one town, according to a letter to be discussed at the Town Council meeting Wednesday.

The letter from the Belgrade Board of Selectmen says a needed regional strategy will require cooperation, and funding, from area communities, even those with no lakefront property.

Mike Perkins, chairman of the Oakland Town Council, said that the town is ready to do its part to protect the watershed, which comprises East Pond, Great Pond, Long Pond, McGrath Pond, Messalonskee Lake, North Pond and Salmon Lake.

"The lakes are a very valuable asset to this community," Perkins said. "We'll do whatever we can within reason."

"Eurasian milfoil is a highly aggressive aquatic plant that can form dense mats which congest waterways and crowd out native aquatic plants," according to a University of Maine Cooperative Extension Sevice publication.

Perkins said that the timing of the letter, which comes just as Oakland begins its budget process, will allow council members to consider spending money on the campaign against milfoil in 2013.

The Belgrade board's Jan. 10 letter to the council makes the case for a regional approach, which could allow for the sharing of milfoil extraction equipment and open up doors to grants and other forms of state and federal funding.

"An aggressive effort is required, which needs the support of all individual towns," reads the letter, which was sent to state representatives, community leaders and the 13 towns in the watershed.

The board said that each town in the watershed has a stake in the problem because milfoil can threaten the recreational value of the lakes.

"We also must recognize that municipalities not bordering waterways may be indirectly affected by an economic decline," the board wrote.

In October, Belgrade invited 13 area towns to participate in a discussion about the problem, but only Mercer sent a representative to the meeting.

Other items on the Oakland council agenda include electing board officers, accepting the resignation of librarian Carol Cooley, discussing the posting of future public meetings on the town's website and discussing the implications of statewide developments on the local budget process.

The council also is scheduled to hear an update on the leadership situation at FirstPark, a municipality-owned cooperative business park that has been searching for a new executive director since October.

The meeting is at 6 p.m. in the Oakland Town Office.

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