



TOWN OF LEVERETT
Massachusetts 01054

**Conservation Commission statement relating to DEP NOI Filing #200-0196
and Herbicide Use in Leverett Pond**

Posted Sept 19, 2022

In 2022, the Leverett Conservation Commission (LCC) and MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) granted a 5-year permit to the non-profit Friends of Leverett Pond (FLP) to manage nuisance aquatic vegetation in Leverett Pond using a variety of methods. These methods include hand-raking, mechanical harvesting, manual harvesting, herbicide application, and installation of benthic barriers. Pond draw-down is not an approved practice under this permit. The FLP has funded and conducted management activities on Leverett Pond for many decades.

The 2022 permit (DEP NOI #200-0196) puts in place new standards for evaluating and monitoring the treatment of aquatic species. A [wildlife survey of the pond](#) was conducted in June 2021 by SWCA, an environmental consulting firm based in Amherst, Mass. The goal of the survey was to establish baseline conditions for wildlife habitats and identify areas where high concentrations of target plant species (primarily Eurasian milfoil) were found.

A survey of fish found in the pond was also conducted in 2021 (the last survey was done in 1994). Pond ecology is complex and vegetation growth is dynamic, so a survey is only a snapshot in time. However, annual surveys, along with water quality sampling tests, will be used to help the commission assess the effects of pond treatments as well as to compare present and future conditions. Overall, the health of the Leverett Pond ecosystem is extremely good.

The new 5-year permit comes with numerous conditions. FLP will present its proposed treatment plan annually, and report on its management activities and findings. It will inform the LCC of the timing and location of all activities, and inform the public in advance of chemical and hydro raking treatments. The Conservation Commission will collect and review reports and data each year, and use the information when reviewing the annual treatment plan. (See complete [Order of Conditions](#).)

Given local concerns regarding herbicide use in the pond, the LCC invites the public to join its meetings throughout the year when pond management is on the agenda. (Meeting agendas are posted on this website 48 hours prior to each meeting.) More information can be found on this website; by attending monthly LCC meetings (typically held the first



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Monday of the month); or by speaking to members of the commission. The commission will endeavor to post relevant updates regularly on the town website.

Regarding the use of herbicides, the LCC wants to make it clear that individual towns (and local conservation commissions) do not have the authority to prohibit the use of approved and state-regulated herbicides on private lands or property of the Commonwealth. (Leverett Pond is defined as a “Great Pond” and as such is the property of the Commonwealth.) A handful of MA towns have adopted policies restricting pesticide use on town-owned lands. Some towns have petitioned the state to opt-out of state-mandated aerial mosquito pesticide spraying. No municipality in Massachusetts has legal authority to regulate herbicide use in waters defined as property of the Commonwealth—only the state has that authority.

Residents wishing to see restrictions on the use of pesticides (or herbicides) in town might form a pesticide awareness committee to inform and educate the public on pesticide use and alternatives, or to increase public notification and reporting of pesticide applications. Additionally, residents could urge the town to adopt a budget to direct a management plan for Leverett Pond. Such a plan would require the town to fund water quality testing, surveys, volunteer recruitment, etc. The Leverett Conservation Commission welcomes respectful discussion on these issues.

Thank you,

Leverett Conservation Commission

(statement approved by the Conservation Commission at a public meeting on Sept. 12, 2022)