

Asian clams winning at Lake George

By Brian Nearing, Times Union

LAKE GEORGE – Two years and \$1.5 million later, efforts to rid the Queen of American Lakes of a harmful invasive clam seem to have failed. With fast-breeding Asian clams now spreading, the best hope is to keep their numbers in check – a costly fight that could last for years – and wait for a breakthrough eradication technique.

That was the grim assessment last week by the lake's Asian Clam Rapid Response Task Force, a group of state, municipal, civic and environmental groups that has spearheaded work to eradicate clam beds by smothering them under weighted underwater mats.

The setback in the battle against the clams comes as the Lake George Park Commission, the state agency in charge of protecting the lake, also is racing to create a plan to reduce the risk of future aquatic invaders being brought in by recreational boaters, who likely transported the Asian clam from other infested water bodies in bilge water or bait wells. Widespread clam infestation in the lake could mean diminished tourism, business and property values. Clams have already caused some of those problems in Lake Tahoe, on the California-Nevada border, where beds now cover several hundred acres.

Thriving in sunlit, shallow, sandy lake bottoms, the tiny mollusks pose a major threat to the lake's legendary gin-clear waters, which drive vibrant tourism, boating and recreational fishing industries.

Large clam colonies can foul beach waters because their excretions fuel massive algae blooms. Fast-breeding

hermaphrodites, clams can quickly multiply into the millions and, when dead, wash up on beaches, where their razor-sharp shells make walking dangerous.

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