

Hinckley's Pond Alum Treatment Planned For September.

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A new bike shelter and rack, viewing site and stairway to Hinckley's Pond will be constructed this fall along the section of the Cape Cod Rail Trail at the intersection of Pleasant Lake Avenue.

HARWICH — Hinckley's Pond is expected to receive an alum treatment in September to remove excessive phosphorus which has lead to numerous algae blooms and fish kills in the pond in recent years.

Town officials were successful, after a couple of proposals, in getting the community preservation committee to provide funds from the recreational category of the Community Preservation Act for the treatment. The committee recommended \$650,000 for a two-prong approach for pond improvements under the recreational category of the act. The funds were approved by town meeting a year ago.

The funds included \$575,000 for the phosphorus inactivation of surficial sediment (alum) treatment in the pond and an additional \$75,000 to improve recreational access. The community preservation committee wanted better public access, Town Administrator Christopher Clark said.

It has taken years to get to this point, said Natural Resources Director Heinz Proft. In 2012 CDM Smith Inc., was hired to conduct a study of conditions in the pond and recommended alum treatment as a means of mitigating the excess phosphorus. Harwich and Brewster conducted an alum treatment of Long Pond several years earlier which has abated algae blooms and fish kills.

The bid for the alum treatment came in well under the cost estimate. A couple of weeks ago selectmen voted to issue the contract to Solitude Lake Management for \$347,300. "They come highly recommended by other towns and they're rearing to go," Proft said of Solitude Lake Management. Selectman Larry Ballantine pointed out the conservation commission put conditions on the alum treatment when it issued its approval of the project, including after-the-fact monitoring due to what commissioners saw as a lack of scientific and environmental information on the long-term impact.

Proft pointed out the state Department of Fish and Wildlife wants immediate notification if there is any impact on fish in the pond, and the process will be stopped until officials are satisfied the issue is resolved. Both state officials and the conservation commission want a report filed 60 days after the application is performed.

Proft told selectmen establishment of a monitoring program is underway. “We don’t want a fox in the hen house,” he said, noting he doesn't want the contractor conducting the monitoring.

Proft said the state Department of Fish and Wildlife has provided a window for the alum treatment to take place between June and September. The application is planned between Sept. 9 and 30.

As for the public access component to Hinckley’s Pond, Clark said a bike shelter and rack will be built, along with a viewing site and stairs down to the pond along the Cape Cod Rail Trail at Pleasant Lake Avenue, across the road from Local Flavor, the former Pleasant Lake General Store.

Clark said the project was slowed down with the retirement of Town Engineer Robert Cafarelli. New Town Engineer Griffin Ryder and Building Maintenance Department Director Sean Libby are seeking to prioritize the work and it will be done in the fall, Clark said.

There are a few details to be worked out. Part of the location where the bike shelter will be is along the bike trail, which is owned by the state Department of Recreation and Conservation and overseen by Nickerson State Park in Brewster. Clark said the town is in communication with Eric Levy, a local resident and director of the state park who has expressed an interest in working with the town on the project.