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New weedkiller may be working in lake chain

Full effect of Sonar on hydrilla
will be visible in 2 to 3 months

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OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — White-tipped hydrilla on Lake Maitland is a sign that a potent new herbicide is working and the chain of lakes will be clear of weeds by spring, the city's environmental consultant said this week.

"As we see what we have done now, it's doing a beautiful job," said Bill McClintock.

Because the herbicide Sonar is slow-acting, lake users will not see the complete effect of the chemical for two to three months. But once it kills the roots of weeds, it keeps lakes free of weeds for 18 months or longer, McClintock said.

The chemical also has turned some cattails white, a sign it is killing those plants as well. McClintock said that cattails should be controlled to some extent so they do not grow 50 feet or more into the lake.

City officials said they are unaware of any complaints from residents about the treatment.

Other chemicals have killed lake weeds but not their roots, McClintock said. "The trouble was, after you knocked it down and gave it a length of time, it started all over again."

Winter Park crews began applying Sonar to the chain of lakes in October, starting with Lake Minnehaha in Maitland. Sections of lakes Maitland and Virginia also have been treated. Treatment of the chain, including lakes Minnehaha, Nina, Maitland, Virginia, Osceola and Mizell, will continue until about March, McClintock said.

Maitland officials have agreed to pay Winter Park \$90,000 toward the cost of treating the northern end of the chain in Maitland city limits. Winter Park has budgeted \$300,000 to treat the entire chain, including Maitland's portion. Both cities will be reimbursed for about 50 percent of the costs by the Florida Department of Natural Resources because they allow public access through boat launches on Lake

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Maitland and Lake Virginia.

Last summer, money budgeted by Maitland for weed treatment was used up by June. Lakes Minnehaha and Nina and the northern section of Lake Maitland became choked with weeds and several Maitland residents complained to the Maitland City Council. McClintock said Winter Park stopped its treatment of the Maitland section after Maitland exhausted the \$50,000 it budgeted for treatment.

Lakefront residents may experience some inconvenience during the treatment because they cannot use lake water for irrigation for one week after a dose is applied to a lake. The city timed its application for months of low irrigation, McClintock said.

Because Sonar can spread far beyond the area treated, the city has posted warning flags in large areas around lakes and advised lakefront residents not to irrigate until the flags are taken down, he said, adding that the product is harmless to fish and human beings, even in concentrated doses.

Sonar is expensive initially. One quart costs \$176; 2 quarts are enough to treat 1 acre.

But city officials hope the treatment will be cheaper than other weedkillers in the long run because the effects of the herbicide last longer and because it spreads over a large area.

"The dilution of it is really incredible," said McClintock. Crews can treat a 10-acre area, for example, and see the effects over a 20- or 30-acre area, he said.

Because of Sonar's tendency to spread, the city applies the herbicide on 10 acres at a time, waits one week, and then moves to another 10-acre area not adjacent to the last application, he said.