

## Bellport



### Telehealth demonstration

Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center's Home Health Agency recently hosted a demonstration of its Home Telehealth system for Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton). The event was part of National Home Care and Hospice Month.

The Home Telehealth Program allows nurses to monitor vital signs, as well as see and speak with patients, all while the patient is resting comfortably in their own home. Bishop was able to sit in on a patient visit. He was able to observe the interactions between the nurse and patient and was impressed with the technology.

"The Home Telehealth Program represents the kind of advance we need to control health care costs while delivering first-rate patient care," Bishop said. "I am excited to continue working with Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center to help improve access to care as well as affordability."

The program works by providing a direct computer link between homebound patients and nurses at the Brookhaven's Home Health Agency. Though nurses will continue to visit patients in their homes, Home Telehealth gives them the opportunity to monitor patients in between visits. The program bene-



Brookhaven Town will undertake a \$1.24 million project to rid the Carmans River of the invasive cabomba weed.

ADV/File photo

## Town to work on aquatic restoration

*Carmans River, Yaphank Lakes focus of cabomba removal*

By SARAH HARTMANN

The Carmans River may have dodged a bullet six years ago when it was determined that underground toxic plumes emanating from Brookhaven National Laboratory had not adversely affected its pristine waters. But today, the river noted for its beauty and its endangered Brown Trout is facing another perilous situation, this time from cabomba weed, a particularly nasty species of invasive plant reviled worldwide for its ability to strangle the life from the waterways it infests.

It is for this reason that the town of Brookhaven passed two resolutions at

its Dec. 18 town hall meeting to authorize financing and establish a working group for aquatic habitat restoration of the Carmans River, as well as both the Upper and Lower Yaphank lakes. Councilwoman Connie Kepert (4th District) introduced both resolutions, the first of which issues five-year serial bonds in the amount of \$1.24 million to fund the restoration, the second which establishes a Carmans River Protection Working Group to develop strategies. According to Kepert's office, the purpose of the aquatic habitat grant is to install fish passages and restore native fisheries in the Carmans River; to remove obstructions on the upper and lower

lakes; and to combat invasive plants and storm water runoff.

At the town hall meeting, Kepert noted that the town expects 50 percent of the \$1.24 million cost to be reimbursed through state and federal grants. In response to ABCO President MaryAnn Johnston's concerns, Kepert noted that the groups invited to participate in the working group are true non-profit, non-governmental environmental groups while the working group itself would follow a specific model.

According to the resolution, the working group will be chaired by Adri-

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## Aquatic restoration

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enne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE), one of the non-profit groups participating in the working group. The three other non-profits that will participate are Trout Unlimited, The Long Island Nature Conservancy, and the Open Space Council. Also to be included in the working group are to be four residents coming from the Upper and Lower lakes of the Carmans River Community. Esposito noted that this means all resident representatives would come from Yaphank.

In November, the Suffolk County Water Quality Review Committee approved the Yaphank Lakes as a pilot program for invasive weed remediation. The program, which was proposed by Legislator Jack Eddington (WFP-Medford), will allocate \$250,000 to discover the best method of weed removal and then remediate the lakes.

Removing invasive species like cabomba from the waterways remains a hotly contested topic. One camp suggests the best way is to remove dams to allow waterways to flow freely and flush out. A downside to this method would be the fact that all ponds would disappear, along with any ecosystem that has grown up around them over time. Another downside would be the fact that some communities have been built around ponds and lakes and forged an identity from them.

Another approach to removing cabomba involves the use of the aquatic herbicide called Sonar. Esposito explained that Sonar was used last summer in the Peconic River, at the urging of a fisherman's group. Esposi-

to, who sits on the Suffolk County Pesticide Phase-out Citizen's Advisory Committee, said the committee approved the use of Sonar in this one instance as a sort of pilot program to see if it would work against the weed but not the fish.

"It worked, and the fisherman said the fish are fine. Peconic Baykeeper Kevin McAllister was concerned, and Sonar may or may not be appropriate for the Carmans River, given the endangered Brown Trout," said Esposito. She added that each waterway would have to be evaluated individually and that what works well for one may not be the answer for another.

"But we really don't have a position, and must evaluate all of our options to choose the least damaging one. To do nothing, however, will be the most damaging since cabomba is so deadly to the life of a river and there is no stopping it," she said.

Esposito noted that in the Peconic River, as happened in Patchogue Lake more recently, concerned groups tried to hand pull the weed, an approach that only exacerbated the problem. An insidious invader, cabomba, when yanked, fragments easily and sends out parts, spore-like, to take root elsewhere and in greater numbers.

Thus, the mission of the Carmans River Protection Working Group will be to pull in experts on how best to eradicate the cabomba weed, explained Esposito, who also noted that currently the Environmental Defense Fund is looking to remove dams from many of Long Island's estuaries. "We will find out why they are taking that position," she said. The group's first meeting is scheduled for Jan. 3. ■

## Trimming overgrown weeds

*Special unit to tackle dramatic rise in invasive species*

With invasive species proliferating throughout New York's waterways, forests and farmlands, Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis announced the formation of a new office within DEC to focus on one of the state's fastest growing environmental threats.

The new Office of Invasive Species will bring together biologists and foresters to develop ways to combat the problem, and work with universities, other state agencies and non-profit organizations to support research and raise public awareness. From zebra mussels to Eurasian water milfoil to Sirex wood wasps, hundreds of non-native plants and animals have invaded New York—especially in the last decade, thought to be linked to the rise in global shipping—posing threats to ecosystems.

"These invasive species have a devastating impact, not only on the environment but also the economy," said Governor Eliot Spitzer. "They have wiped out certain tree species, hurt recreational and commercial fishing, and tainted water supplies. This new office will bring a much needed focus to a problem we cannot ignore."

Earlier this year, Spitzer signed a law to create the New York State Invasive Species Council, comprised of representatives of nine state agencies and an advisory committee of business, academia and conservation interest groups. In addition, the 2007-08 state budget included \$5 million for invasive species programs, including grants for municipalities to eradicate problem species, public outreach efforts through Cornell Cooperative Extension and a plan to develop "clean stock" at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station

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