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# PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS

www.pentictonwesternnews.com

VOL. 44 ISSUE 104

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2010



**TOUGH SLEDDING** — Emily Trupp of Penticton manages to take advantage of some of the remaining snow before it disappeared to get in a few more runs at the Wiltse Elementary School hill. Cooler temperatures and snow are in the forecast.

Mark Brett/Western News

## Osoyoos mayor sees progress on milfoil

KRISTI PATTON  
Western News Staff

The milfoil washing up on Osoyoos beach is a good thing, according to the town's mayor and Okanagan Basin Water Board chair Stu Wells.

"We have had such a successful year in our winter program, and because of that success there has been quite a bit of milfoil washed up on beaches," said Wells. "Initially people were inquiring about it and whose responsibility it is. It washing up on the beaches is actually a sign of a very good thing."

The OBWB is putting in extra hours this winter trying to get ahead of the outbreak of

Eurasian watermilfoil while the weather is behaving. Last year Osoyoos Lake had significant milfoil growth, and Wells said one of the reasons is that the OBWB had a very ineffective winter program to control milfoil because the lake had frozen over, making it impossible for crews to work on the pesky weed.

"Rototilling in winter is a much more effective method to get rid of the weed. By removing the plant at the root and leaving it to shrivel and die in the cold water, the milfoil bed shrinks considerably," said Wells.

The summer program is only cosmetic, or like a haircut is how Wells put it. The milfoil is cut off about six feet down by machines, taken out of the lake and trucked away. This

does nothing for the eradication of milfoil.

"Last winter we were just getting started when the lake froze over. Well that's the end of that program and is the reason why there was a significant milfoil growth," said Wells.

Three people in the area are employed by the OBWB to operate the equipment, which sees its way up the valley to de-root milfoil in Skaha Lake and Okanagan Lake. The initiative has been an ongoing battle since the inception of the OBWB, and Wells said many surrounding communities quite often turn to the board for advice on milfoil control since it can never be eradicated from the lakes.

"If we can curtail its growth, that is a solid and successful program," said Wells. "We get

a lot of questions from the American side of Osoyoos Lake. They have the same problems down there and they ask for information and if they could contract us to control it. We haven't answered all those questions yet."

While the summer program is a cosmetic control and used for swimming and boating safety, Wells said it does have one benefit. If the milfoil is raked and put on people's gardens, they are assured a beautiful, rich compost in time for spring.

"With last summer's significant harvesting on the lake, water board staff ended up with more requests for the material than they could fill," said Wells, who invites people to use the nutrient-rich material in their yards.