



## **MILFOIL SOUTH OF BORDER TO BE TREATED WITH HERBICIDE**

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Washington State says it has reached an agreement with B.C.'s Ministry of Environment to use an herbicide to treat milfoil on the U.S. side of Osoyoos Lake. But the situation isn't sitting well with the mayor of Osoyoos.

In an interview with Osoyoos Times, Sandy Howard, a spokesperson for the Washington State Department of Ecology, said reducing the size of the weed cull was a key component of the agreement. The area to be treated will be about four hectares, all on the American side of the border. In the initial plan, the area to be culled was 120 hectares.

"We had extensive consultations with the Ministry of Environment to reach an agreement," Howard said. "In the end, we believe that we've addressed all of B.C.'s concerns and those expressed by the Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board (OCNWCB) in Washington State."

Howard says the Department of Ecology is confident that the herbicide treatment will protect water quality. "And because the flow will take it further south, to the U.S. side of the lake, we do not believe the treated water will get into the B.C. part of the lake."

A spokesperson for the B.C. Ministry of Environment confirmed that an agreement had been reached but is not aware of any immediate plans for the pesticide application to proceed. Communications officer Suntanu Dalal said, "The Washington State Department of Ecology informed the B.C. Ministry of Environment on Sept. 9 that they had approved the use of pesticides to control Eurasian watermilfoil on the U.S. side of Osoyoos Lake."

"The Ministry of Environment is currently sharing this information with several parties and gathering advice from Canadian experts regarding the permit conditions. In the meanwhile, we have been assured that we will be informed prior to the pesticide application proceeding."

Osoyoos Mayor Stu Wells, Chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), was less than thrilled by the decision. "I have concerns about it (the agreement)," he said. "It looks like a stop-gap measure to make a long-term abatement program more palatable."

Before the area to be treated was reduced, Wells had expressed the view that "the hydrology of Osoyoos Lake and the backswelling Okanagan River would make it possible for chemicals applied south of the border to mix into the northern half of the lake. The potential risks to the

ecosystem, drinking and agricultural water intakes, residents, and visitors on the Canadian side of the lake are unknown.”

The chemical expected to be used is Triclopyr – it has been successful in battling milfoil on other American lakes.

For years, officials on the Canadian side of Osoyoos Lake have controlled milfoil by harvesting the plant in the summer and rototilling it in the fall and winter. While this has helped boaters and swimmers in Canada, lakeshore residents in Washington blame the harvesting and rototilling for a number of problems in their part of the lake.

Mike Cantwell and John Moran, who live along the west side of the lake south of the international border, told the Times that the southern portion of the lake was plagued with “floating mats” of milfoil, which, they maintain, drift down from the Canadian side after harvesting. The mats are so thick in places that some people are having trouble launching boats or enjoying other recreational activities on the water.

In response, earlier this year Cantwell, Moran and a number of other lakeshore residents asked the Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board (OCNWCB) to seek permission from the Department of Ecology to use a granular herbicide in Osoyoos Lake to kill the milfoil.