



LOCAL NEWS

Lake Osoyoos to be discussed at US-Canada meeting

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The Associated Press

OSOYOOS, British Columbia —

Water supply and the impact of climate change and population growth on a lake that straddles Washington state and British Columbia were expected to be discussed during a forum involving officials and scientists from the United States and Canada that opened Monday.

A 25-year-old agreement that regulates levels on Lake Osoyoos and ensures enough water reaches Zosel Dam in Washington expires in February and is up for renewal. A new agreement could cover the same period, or it could be renewed for an indefinite period.

Walt Hart, a city councilman in the border town of Oroville, Wash., said water will be the major issue facing the arid region in the future.

"I'm concerned about Osoyoos Lake water levels and the ability to meet the needs south of the border," Hart said in a statement. "As more and more water gets used in the north, it affects the amount getting to us."

The Okanagan region of British Columbia is home to Canada's only desert, and there is less water per person here than almost anywhere in Canada. But there is rising demand for scarce water in Washington, where some aquifers are going dry.

There has been talk that the new agreement should include guaranteed flow rates, although the Okanagan Basin Water Board has suggested more study before that is implemented.

The two day meeting was also slated to cover protection of water for fish and control of invasive Eurasian milfoil, which can form a dense layer of vegetation on the surface of lakes, interfering with swimming, fishing, water skiing, and boating.

Earlier this month, the Washington Department of Ecology approved a plan that sharply reduced the amount of Lake Osoyoos that will be treated with chemicals to control milfoil.

The department approved the Okanogan Noxious Weed Control Board's plan to treat milfoil in approximately 10 acres of isolated coves in the Washington portion of the lake, in response to concerns raised by British Columbia officials over original plans to treat 300 acres.

The department said it is confident that the lake treatments will protect water quality, and it believes treated water will not enter the British Columbia portion of the lake.