

[News](#)[Community](#)[Sports & Rec.](#)[Editorial](#)[TV Guide](#)[Classifieds](#)[Oliver in](#)

You Are Here: [Home](#) » [Featured](#) » [Vaseux Lake community aiming to rid waters of invasive milfoil](#)

Vaseux Lake community aiming to rid waters of invasive milfoil

Posted by: [staff1](#) Posted date: September 08, 2016 In: [Featured](#), [News](#) | comment : 1



Vaseux Lake residents have been diligent in cleaning up the milfoil as seen here in this huge pile on the shore.

Photo contributed

(Editor's note: The following is the first in a two-part series on milfoil at Vaseux Lake. This week looks at suspicions that a sewage plant is significantly contributing towards a milfoil surplus. Part 2 will look at the response from the community and governments.)

Milfoil has run amok in Vaseux Lake.

As a result of the the invasive water plant's unrestrained prosperity, Vaseux Lake is becoming ecologically imbalanced and its recreational offerings are diminishing.

Some residents believe the drastic increase in the rate of milfoil was caused by the installation of the Okanagan Falls Sewage Treatment Plant in 2013, but the Regional District of Okanagan-

Similkameen rejects that hypothesis.

Liisa Bloomfield, engineering supervisor with the RDOS, said the sewage plant currently cycles its effluent right into Vaseux Lake, and staffers test the waters to make sure the chemistry abides by stringent standards, "and we're well within our permit," she said.

Also, RDOS has plans to divert that flow of effluent into nearby wetlands, which it has plans to create by fall 2017.

"The water readings are quite low but the wetland will take anything out," she said.

But Sundial Road resident Norbert Gaumont isn't happy about the sewage plant's process – he believes the effluence is causing adverse effects, and he suspects the RDOS's effluence standards are too lenient for such a small body of water. If the sewage plant's effluence causes no detrimental effects, then he wonders why the RDOS would bother with its plans to develop a wetland tailings.

"Since the plant opened chemicals and extra nutrients have been entering directly into our lake," he said. "I will be sending a letter to the RDOS demanding to know why (the wetlands treatment process) was not done before the sewage plant opened... I don't believe it is a coincidence that our lake now suffers from large amount of algae blooms and a large increase in milfoil from the extra nutrients. The chemicals that have entered our lake is also a major concern all to save money."

Bloomfield said plans for the sewage plants always included a wetland tailings but the RDOS didn't have the resources in place to be able to complete the entire project in one phase. Also, she said residents of Vaseux Lake use septic systems, which is a likely contributing factor to the milfoil's rapid growth.

Regardless of what's causing it though, Gaumont and others in the Vaseux Lake community just want the milfoil dealt with.

"We can lay blame on various ministries, but at the end of the day it's a conscious decision not to do anything about our lake," Gaumont said.

Milfoil is also present in other South Okanagan lakes including Skaha, Okanagan and Osoyoos. Unlike Vaseux, those lakes all fall under the jurisdiction of the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), which monitors and treats excessive levels of milfoil.

Because Vaseux is in the middle of all those lakes, Gaumont couldn't rationalize why it's not on the OBWB's list of lakes.

"It's such a small, shallow lake, milfoil is much more detrimental to it. And the temperature of water increased because milfoil stops circulation."

"I'm really glad that Mr. Gaumont brought it to my attention," said RDOS Area C director Terry Schafer in an email. "It's incredible how much of the stuff the Sundial Road residents have had to deal with. It's not good for them, it's not good for the fish, not good for swimming or canoeing, not good for our tourism image and definitely not good for fire truck suction pumps, should they need to ever be employed in an emergency."

In response to a recommendation from the community, Schafer said he urged the RDOS to request Vaseux be added to the list of treated lakes.

"That was accomplished on Thursday with a motion to that effect and passed by the board," Schafer said.

However, there are still some logistical challenges in the way before any equipment can enter the lake to deal with the milfoil.

By Dan Walton

