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Need some accountability

Posted by: **staff1** Posted date: **September 21, 2016** In: **Editorial** | comment : **0**

While the bass are exchanging high-fives amidst all that extra milfoil in Vaseux Lake, the same can't be said about the residents.

The lake is a real mess, overgrown with algae and weeds, which make it a chore to paddle a kayak or retrieve a lure. (Again, bass must be calling all the neighbours for a block party.)

But seriously, something is wrong with this lake and the powers that be have a responsibility to address the problem.

It's nice to see the Okanagan Basin Water Board step in with a plan to target the lake for rototilling. But we have to focus on what's causing the accelerated growth of all this milfoil.

Some people are pointing the finger at the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) north of the lake, which is probably the most tangible entity to blame.

We are told that the sewage plant, commissioned in 2013, currently cycles its treated effluent right into the lake, but staff routinely test the water chemistry to ensure standards are met. Note that the regional district has future plans to divert the effluent into nearby wetlands. This sounds contradictory to the preservation of ecosystems, but it's better than pumping human waste directly into the lake.

One official says the use of residential septic systems around the lake is likely a contributing factor to the milfoil's rapid growth. But we tend to think it's the treatment plant.

A regional district memorandum on the issue states that phosphorus and nitrogen discharged during the first two years of the plant's operation were slightly higher than permitted levels. But current discharges are much less than permitted levels, according to the report. However, nitrogen discharges are still a concern.

The total effluent discharged in Vaseux Lake in 2015 was 207,440 cubic metres. That's 207,440 cubic metres too much.

Some residents who live on Vaseux Lake have been very diligent by painstakingly raking the milfoil into piles. One resident said he felt like dumping a pile in front of MLA Linda Larson's office in Oliver. But what about the regional district's office in Penticton?

At least the regional board voted to put the lake on the milfoil harvesting list. What should have happened first was the development of the wetlands tailing area to accommodate the effluent. Treated or not, this stuff does not belong in the lake.

Bottom line is there needs to be some accountability for what's happening here.

Lyonel Doherty, editor