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WATCH: Abundance of milfoil in Osoyoos



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OSOYOOS, BC – An invasive aquatic plant called Eurasian milfoil is growing uncontrollably in Osoyoos Lake.

Dave Caswell, a milfoil control operator with the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), is working overtime to harvest the plant.

“The weeds definitely appear to be more abundant than normal,” says Caswell.

Since milfoil thrives in warmer climates, Osoyoos Lake has more of it than other water bodies in the Okanagan.

In addition, the provincial government ordered the OBWB to stop work in Osoyoos Lake for three months earlier this year.

“There’s a blanket work window restriction so that we can’t do any work at all between April 1st-July 1st. That’s due to small-mouth bass and large-mouth bass,” explains James Littley, the OBWB’s milfoil control program coordinator.

The basses are commercial fish and the BC government wants to protect their spawning habitats.

Now Caswell is playing catch up, collecting truck loads of milfoil every day.

This is the first year the OBWB was restricted to when it could rototill and harvest the weeds.

The milfoil also pollutes the water quality, affecting the native fish populations.

Littley hopes the two groups can collaborate on a more efficient way to control the aggressive plant, while protecting fish spawning habitat.

“Ideally, I’m hoping we can come up with an arrangement where we have an environmental professional go out and identify the areas that are critical for fish habitat in the spring,” says Littley. “If there aren’t fish there, we’ll be able to expand some of those work windows.”

In the meantime, Caswell continues to work his 10-hour shifts, trimming the dense carpet of milfoil that grows below.

Watch the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oXqwgtKxIM&index=2&list=UUflhNdwz3zJeDBb_fVqW5EQ