

Council backs milfoil control

By Vernon Morning Star

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Even though they don't have a lake benefitting from the program, the Township of Spallumcheen has thrown its support to the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB).

The OBWB is negotiating with the provincial ministry of forests, lands and natural resource operations to waive new requirements and grandfather the OBWB's [Eurasian milfoil program](#)'s activities to be able to continue milfoil control operations like it's done for 30 years in the same locations throughout the Okanagan.

"At minimum, the water board requests that we be granted long-term permits for our operations," wrote Stu Wells, OBWB chairperson, in a letter to Forests Minister Steve Thomson.

The ministry informed OBWB that it will be required to provide a 100-metre buffer zone for rototilling whenever a Rocky Mountain ridged mussel (RMRM) shell fragment is found on a beach unless the ministry conducts diver surveys and relocations.

The board is prohibited from working anywhere a live RMRM has been sited, without relocation of mussels or mitigation.

Ministry staff also indicated to OBWB that it will likely require mitigation for areas where the common floater mussels are found.

"The areas we treat are already highly disturbed, and additional restrictions are a great financial burden to this local-government-funded program," wrote Wells.

"In some cases, the new requirements could render it impossible to do effective milfoil control."

OBWB is a collaboration of the three Okanagan regional districts. The Eurasian milfoil program helps keep beaches and boating areas clear of the densely growing invasive aquatic weed.

"The Okanagan board is very concerned about these new requirements," said Spallumcheen Mayor Janice Brown.

Coun. Todd York called for a motion to support the board.

"It may be a letter that comes from an area that doesn't have lakefront, but it's extremely important that we talk about a regionally important thing," said York. "All of us are users of the lakes."

Council unanimously supported York's motion to send a letter of support to the OBWB. Coun. Ed Hanoski was absent from Monday's regular council meeting.

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