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## Harvester anticipated to finally fight milfoil problem in South Okanagan lake

[Dan Walton](#)

 Rototilling on Okanagan Lake.  
(BEN BULMER / iNFOnews.ca)

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A harvester is expected to bring balance back to Vaseux Lake in the South Okanagan where milfoil has run amok.

Locals have been [advocating for years that more action be taken at the lake](#).

The body of water sits between Oliver and Okanagan Falls so it's one of the southern-most lakes in the valley. Also sunlight can reach much of its lakebed because it's not very deep. So it maintains warm temperatures, which creates ideal conditions for milfoil. Motorized watercraft – which disturb milfoil habitats by creating wakes – are not allowed on the lake.

"Vaseux can be one of the worst lakes in the Okanagan for milfoil," said James Littley, operations and grants manager for the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

He said 2016 and 2020 were two of the worst summers for milfoil growth, when "there were sections of the lake completely covered."

**READ MORE:** [Milfoil removal on Vaseux Lake delayed](#)

Harvesters have been part of the water board's arsenal for decades. But since they're motorized, red tape has prevented the machines from being used at Vaseux Lake.

The OBWB has the approval of the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Osoyoos Indian Band, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. However the organization is still waiting on approval from the province


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Littley is optimistic the province will give it the green light and expects the machines to enter the lake by mid-July.

The practice will ideally take place once per year, "but with our limited resources, we only have two harvesting machines for the whole valley."



FILE PHOTO - If milfoil is left unchecked, this is what lakes will look like. This photo was taken near the north end of Osoyoos Lake in 2010.

Image Credit: SUBMITTED/Okanagan Basin Water Board

Littley compared harvesting the milfoil to trimming a lawn, as it simply sets the plant back.

Rototiller machines offers a longer-term solution by de-rooting the plant, but special permits have to be approved before it can be used at Vaseux Lake.

"If you can de-root in the same area for two or three years in a row you can get a 90% reduction in the plant density," Littley said. "You can almost locally eradicate the milfoil after a couple years of treatment."

**READ MORE:** [Vaseux Lake residents concerned about lake water quality](#)

Unfortunately the stubborn plant will always grow back eventually.

But the harvester will make a big difference for recreational users, especially boaters and kayakers.

"It'll help keep the water quality up because milfoil has such negative effects," he said.

"Even by removing the top five feet you get a kind of temperature reprieve where the water is able to mix and oxygenate, reduce algae and produce all sorts of good effects."

– This story was corrected at 2:30 p.m. on June 7. Harvesters were mistakenly referred to as rototillers.