

Mother Nature Unveils Invasive Weed in Capitol Lake

Invasive aquatic weeds are often detected once they emerge or get caught on powered motor craft. However, the Eurasian water milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) discovered in Capitol Lake, Washington was discovered under more unusual circumstances. Following the Nisqually Earthquake of 2001, officials drained the 260-acre lake, located on the campus of the Washington capitol in Olympia, as part of an effort to determine if nearby roads were stable. Once the water was removed, officials discovered a Eurasian water milfoil (EWM) infestation in the lake.



Events following an earthquake revealed that Eurasian Watermilfoil was growing in a Washington lake.

Challenge:

Once the weed was discovered, an extensive effort began to identify potential approaches to controlling EWM in the lake. EWM is a challenging plant in a number of ways: it can reproduce from fragments, it grows in a range of temperatures and environmental conditions, and out-competes native vegetation. In Capitol Lake, EWM had converted large areas into a monoculture, crowding out competing species. Officials realized it was only a matter of time before the entire lake would be invaded.

Because they had not dealt with EWM prior to this discovery, an advisory panel of nine jurisdictions, including four local governments, a tribe and four state agencies, educated themselves on the invasive weed and the options for control. Following extensive research, it was decided that herbicide use was the best option to get the infestation under control.

Solution:

In July 2004, the State Department of General Administration, which has ownership of Capitol Lake, proceeded with two herbicide treatments, which resulted in 95 percent control of EWM with no detected adverse effects to the lake. Manual removal was used in 2005 to manage the remaining infestation.

Result:

The herbicide treatments in 2004 brought the lake back to a point where less-intensive management approaches could keep EWM at a manageable level. Officials say that intensive monitoring will be vital and control efforts will be ongoing for continued success with the project. They hope to continue managing EWM with fewer chemical treatments now that the initial infestation in Capitol Lake is under control.



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