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Since the application of herbicide, the water of Rainbow Lake is clear of the choking effects of Eurasian milfoil.

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Herbicide treatments kill Rainbow Lake weedsMike Leiby - The Independent | 1 comment

LAKESIDE — Three applications of herbicide to Rainbow Lake last fall appear to have alleviated much of the Eurasian milfoil infestation that was choking its shores.

The abundance of the non-native water plant was keeping people from enjoying fishing and swimming in the lake which draws local residents and visitors year round.

According to officials connected with the effort to get rid of the weed, Rainbow Lake is once again good to go.

“People can swim and fish again without having to deal with the weeds,” Watershed Director for the Little Colorado Reclamation District David Newlin said.

Newlin said the three previous applications have abated the problem, but he did not know by what percentage. The advent of the growing season will tell.

AquaTechnex, a Washington state company specializing in lake health, performed the herbicide treatments. The company also treated a lake in Seattle for the same Eurasian milfoil as that which invaded Rainbow lake.

A case study of Seattle's 160-acre Shoestring Lake indicates the invasive water plant was rapidly colonizing it, as with Rainbow Lake. There are many similarities between Shoestring Lake and Rainbow Lake, according to the case study.

"This invasive weed was well established in the northern and southern bays of the (Shoestring) lake. In addition to the problem in the lake, a stream system connects the lake to a chain of additional residential lakes downstream. While Sonar Aquatic Herbicide has been used routinely by our firm to eradicate this invasive weed from impacted lakes, a whole lake treatment was beyond the resources available to the community. In addition, there was a downstream tribal fish hatchery that was concerned about any product applied to the lake," reads the case study.

To solve the problem in Seattle, AquaTechnex technicians used a barrier curtain system to isolate the treatment areas. It was the first project undertaken by the lake management company using a barrier curtain for containment of an aquatic herbicide in close proximity to target areas while not impacting other parts of the lake.

"The southern curtain covered approximately one half mile and isolated 22 infested acres. The northern barrier was approximately 900 feet long and isolated about five acres. Sonar AS was applied at two week intervals to maintain a lethal dose and FasTEST monitoring was performed both in the treatment areas and outside the barriers. The results were stunning. The milfoil was completely controlled within the enclosures, there was no herbicide detected outside the barriers and hence no impact to the native plants in the lake and no downstream movement of this material."

According to the case study, regular inspections of Shoestring Lake show it to be milfoil-free five years after the Sonar AS treatments.

The same outcome is expected in Rainbow Lake.

Newlin said there is enough money left over from the initial treatments to pay for future spot treatments to help make that outcome a reality.

Those spot treatments may be applied in the spring or the fall. Newlin could not give an exact date.

Newlin said if not for Navajo County kicking in with an additional \$5,000 above and beyond what stakeholders had amassed to rid Rainbow Lake of Eurasian milfoil, future spot treatments would quite likely not be possible.

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