

Daily Inter Lake

Diver will pull weeds in Beaver Lake

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SHELLEY RIDENOUR/Daily Inter Lake

A plan has been developed to eradicate a patch of noxious weeds discovered in Beaver Lake.

Flathead County weed department Superintendent Jed Fisher said a diver will head into the lake, which is north of Whitefish Lake, to pull up the Eurasian water milfoil discovered last week.

Because of concerns that the 12-foot-by-12-foot patch of the weeds could break apart when the diver begins tugging at it, several people in boats will be armed with nets to capture any escaping weeds, Fisher said.

A bottom barrier will be brought to the lake as well, Fisher said.

If the weed spreads even faster than imagined during the removal process, that barrier would be placed on top of the patch. The barrier consists of PVC pipes filled with concrete and attached to a net.

It would keep the noxious weeds in place and prevent the weed mass from breaking apart more and spreading about in the water. That barrier would result in containment of the weeds until another removal approach could be developed, Fisher said.

County employees will be assisted by employees from the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Whitefish Lake Institute.

Multiple agencies in Flathead County had staffers out on "every single lake in Flathead County" on Thursday, Fisher said, searching for Eurasian water milfoil.

"We're not your normal government," he said. "We're actively searching for noxious weeds."

Multiple agencies including the county, Fish, Wildlife and Parks, state agriculture department, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Glacier National Park have had personnel monitoring local lakes for months keeping an eye out for aquatic invasive species.

All information about invasive species "rolls" to the county weed department, Fisher said, which is the controlling agency for noxious weeds and invasive species.

"Everybody is out looking for it," he said. "Everybody agrees we have to be aware of the threat."

Beaver Lake was closed Monday by Fish, Wildlife and Parks to prevent users from further spreading the weed. The lake will remain closed until that agency determines it can be opened.

The goal is to remove the weed patch next week and reopen the lake soon afterward, Fisher said.

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