

Lack of legal notice helped foil weed plan

By Keith Kinnaird
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DEQ also sought delay because of swim classes

Sandpoint – A lack of legal notification about revised plans to use herbicide to combat milfoil off City Beach appears to have played a role in the demise of the noxious weed control project.

Bonner County neglected to have published legal notices of the project, which prevented the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality from issuing a permit for the controversial project, according to June Bergquist, a water quality compliance officer at DEQ in Coeur d'Alene.

State law requires the county to place legal advertisements in the newspaper to help notify residents of the milfoil control effort.

County officials said this week DEQ denied the permit, but Bergquist said the department is declining to issue the permit until the legal notification requirement is satisfied.

"The public needs to be notified correctly," Bergquist said on Thursday.

The proposal to use a granular herbicide called Sonar on infestations has become as tangled as the thick beds of weeds that are clogging the small bay at City Beach.

Bergquist said the county initially planned to do the project earlier this summer but it was pushed back after a contractor's bid was rejected by the county commission.

The county revised the plan with new application dates, but Bergquist said the department had trouble getting maps of the proposed treatment area.

The first set of maps weren't detailed enough, while the second set were illegible when they were faxed to DEQ, Bergquist said.

Meanwhile, DEQ officials still had questions about how the county would control and monitor the application of the time-release granules.

Bergquist said DEQ received the necessary maps, but the legal notice issue remained unresolved, which left the department with no choice but to put off a decision on the permit.

Moreover, DEQ objected to the use of Sonar while the city's Parks & Recreation Department swimming program was under way, which would have resulted in a delay anyway.

Though approved for use in Idaho, Bergquist said Sonar is a relatively new product.

"It's new to Idaho; it's new to North Idaho and we wanted to proceed very cautiously with it," she said.