

## **Panel urges milfoil funding**

*By KEITH KINNAIRD*

*News editor*

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SANDPOINT -- Idaho's lakes commission is strongly urging Governor Dirk Kempthorne to support a Priest Lake lawmaker's proposal to aggressively attack the spread of Eurasian milfoil.

Republican Representative Eric Anderson asked the Legislature last month to fund a program aimed at controlling the pervasive aquatic weed before it's too late and too costly.

"We are very concerned that without this initiative, the spread of milfoil in Lake Pend Oreille and surrounding bodies of water could grow exponentially," commission Chairman Ford Elsaesser said in a Feb. 23 letter to Kempthorne.

The subject of milfoil was discussed at length during the Lake Pend Oreille, Pend Oreille River, Priest Lake and Priest River Commission's Jan. 25 meeting. An estimated 3,000 acres of Lake Pend Oreille are tainted with milfoil and lakes commissioners are concerned the infestations will foul other waterways in the basin.

"The Lakes Commission would strongly urge support from the Governor's Office on an initiative to initiate a major attack on milfoil infestation this year," Elsaesser said in the letter.

Eurasian milfoil is a non-native noxious weed famous for its ability to quickly spread in waterways, forming dense mats which damage fish habitat and recreation areas.

Anderson introduced a milfoil control bill in January and asked the Legislature's budget writers to consider earmarking money for a milfoil control program. Anderson's proposal has garnered support a half-dozen lawmakers from around the state.

"It's the silent monster in the noxious weed group," Anderson said in January. "It's probably the biggest environmental hazard to this state that exists today."