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**Watering park may taint lake
Officials urge care to avoid runoff at Heritage Park**

By John Dodge, *The Olympian*

Using highly treated wastewater to irrigate Heritage Park will require great care to avoid adding more nutrients to nutrient-rich Capitol Lake, lake managers learned Thursday.

The irrigation system being installed as part of the \$1.8 million park improvement project will use LOTT Alliance reclaimed wastewater, which is higher in nitrogen and phosphorus than the city water once used to irrigate the park's lawns. The change is being made because of the community's goal to use recycled water for such purposes and to save drinking water for other purposes.

High levels of nitrogen in the lake and lower Budd Inlet have been linked to increased algal blooms and lower dissolved oxygen levels, conditions harmful to fish and other aquatic life. Phosphorus levels in the lake exceed state water-quality standards, according to the state Department of Ecology.

"The reclaimed water won't be a problem if the irrigation rate doesn't create runoff," LOTT community relations specialist Lisa Dennis-Perez said. LOTT is the regional wastewater utility for Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County.

The nutrients the park grass will receive from the irrigation water should reduce the amount of other fertilizers the lawn needs to stay healthy, according to research on reclaimed irrigation water by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

State park maintenance employees will be informed of the need to water wisely and reduce fertilizer use for the new park lawn, state Department of General Administration planner Nathaniel Jones said.

Jones also reported that a minor but aggressive infestation of Eurasian water milfoil was discovered in the lake last month, the most widespread discovery of milfoil there since the lake was sprayed with an herbicide to kill it in summer 2004.

About 50 plants, mostly in the south and middle basins of the man-made lake, were detected during a milfoil survey Sept. 12. The plants were subsequently pulled by divers late last month.

The pesky, non-native plant was choking the lake two years ago before the Capitol Lake steering committee reluctantly agreed to spray the herbicide, fearful nothing else would control the invasive plant.

The milfoil control strategy assumed all along that some of the plants would survive and possibly spread, requiring constant monitoring and hand-pulling, Ecology aquatic plant specialist Kathy Hamel said.

"It could get out of control again," Hamel cautioned.

The September survey discovered 50 or so milfoil plants, some reaching 20 feet long, Jones said.

"It's not a calamity or a crisis," he said.

Even native plant growth in the lake was unprecedented this summer, Hamel said.

The long stretch of warm, sunny days, combined with the shallow lake depths, were key ingredients for the explosion in aquatic plants, she said.

Park work update

Construction is under way at Heritage Park, a 24-acre state-owned property.

Hydroseeding should be completed in mid-to-late October.

As soon as possible, the temporary fence around the park will be removed. Depending on the turf condition, the Department of General Administration will open it to foot traffic or continue to keep foot traffic off the grass with signs, stakes and ribbons.

The project remains on budget and on schedule with the exception of the trail surfaces and lighting. These will all be completed by the end of the month.

The project will:

- Raise the park perimeter elevation to improve flood protection for the city.
 - Install irrigation and drainage systems.
 - Add topsoil and hydroseed lawn areas.
 - The pathway next to the lake and the restrooms will be open throughout the project.
 - The project will refurbish the parking area at Fifth Avenue and Simmons Street. The parking lot will be closed during construction. Parking along Deschutes Parkway and side streets will not be affected.
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