

The Shawnigan Basin Society's Milfoil Pilot Project
Supported by TimberWest and DFO!
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By Kelly Musselwhite, Executive Director

It would be logical to assume that the amount of rain and subsequent increased flow of water out the north end at Shawnigan Creek are flushing both organic and non-organic debris from Shawnigan Lake; however, this conclusion would not be entirely true. Although it is the case for the top layers of the water column, it is not for the sediment along the lake's bottom. In fact, sedimentation along the bottom of the lake grows during these heavy rains as surface water rushes down the basin from harvested upland forests into an awaiting shoreline. Of course, within those accumulating sediments are high levels of nutrients (and contaminants), which not only cause chemical changes to our drinking water, they also feed plants – more specifically the prolific aquatic invasive Eurasian Water-Milfoil – a growing problem in Shawnigan Lake.

Human activity is the unfortunate vector of milfoil. First introduced into Shawnigan by a contaminated boat bottom or released from a fresh water fish tank, it was then fragmented and spread by increased summer recreation, and finally nourished by aging and leaking septic systems and nutrient laden run-off. Two observational surveys, one in September 2016 and the other in October 2018, have determined Milfoil now covers almost 100% of the lake's shoreline. Exceptions are few: where the bottom is rocky, where there is too much silt, or where obvious human grooming has occurred.

The Shawnigan Basin Society, committed to working to protect the long-term health and safety of the Shawnigan Lake Community watershed and the drinking water it provides, remains focused on appropriate labour and cost effective solutions to combat the growing milfoil problem. To that end, we will be hosting three information sessions – **Wednesday, January 23, February 20, and March 20 at 7 pm in our village office (#4-1760 Shawnigan Lake-Mill Bay Rd)** - to explain the issues of milfoil as well as the technology and strategy behind a science-based pilot project to take place in mid-April. Now having the full support of TimberWest, the owners of the bottom of the Lake, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we anticipate further support from the Ministry of Environment and the Cowichan Valley Regional District where a delegation on the specifics of this project will be relayed at the January 9, 2019 Board Meeting. Further, we will be applying to fund 2-3 Canada Summer Students to help with our milfoil effort as well as applying for an EcoAction Community Funding Program Grant for up to \$100,000 to finance an extensive and long-term management plan.

The Shawnigan Basin Society promotes a holistic approach toward environmental solutions, community engagement, and local stewardship. Please join us! We meet on the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm and our office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm. For more information, please visit our website at www.shawniganbasinsociety.org or email info@shawniganbasinsociety.org.