

FAQ: Grass Carp and Devils Lake

What are these Grass Carp and why are they so special?

Ctenopharyngodon idella, as they are scientifically known, are a freshwater fish species native to China. As herbivores they eat primarily aquatic vegetation, and thus have been introduced in lakes and reservoirs to control aquatic weeds. What makes them special is that the ones in Devils Lake are sterile, and as such they can not reproduce to maintain a population.



When were the Grass Carp first put into Devils Lake? 1986 and 1987 were the first stockings. In fact these were the first stockings of Grass Carp west of the Mississippi. The first batch of 10,000 fish was followed by another 17,050 fish the following year. These plantings were approved by ODFW and EPA as part of the Clean Lakes Program to deal with nuisance aquatic weeds that had taken over the lake. In 1993, a smaller stocking of 5,000 fish was also approved by ODFW. This was the last time they were stocked in the lake, and thus the youngest carp in the lake are now at least 20 years old.



Why can't the District just put in more fish? In 2003, ODFW had a rule change that affected where grass carp could be planted, and in fact who could plant them. Currently, only privately owned lakes of less than 10 acres are eligible. Devils Lake is 680 acres, is publicly owned, and as such has multiple public access points and various ownerships. As a local government the Devils Lake Water Improvement District is also barred from the application process.

So that is why you are seeking a rule change. Yes, but not only this. The Devils Lake Water Improvement District has been actively working to improve the lake for decades. While vegetation management is fundamental to the *Devils Lake Plan*, this watershed based management plan calls first and foremost for nutrient reductions through watershed improvements called "External Controls". Current projects being implemented include the Septic Tank Revitalization Program, a Sewer Local Improvement District, our Save our Shorelines program, the Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Program, and much more. Vegetation Management is still needed though in the short term while these long-term restoration strategies take hold.



Are there other ways to control weeds? Aquatic Vegetation Management falls into three categories: Physical Controls, Chemical Controls, and Biological Controls. Examples of each include aquatic weed harvesting, herbicides, and grass carp respectively. Other examples are Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting, Dredging, rotovation, dyes, milfoil weevils, and more. There are costs and benefits to each type of these practices. In 2006 the District began evaluating over 25 such strategies. Sterile Grass Carp continue to be the most affordable, environmentally responsible, proven method of controlling vegetation for Devils Lake.

What are the impacts of doing nothing? Weeds will inevitably return in force. Not only will the recreational opportunities be impacted, but the economic impacts could be immense as shown in a recently completed Economic Study. Property values will likely devalue as the lake falls from favor.

What can I do to help? Write a letter of support your OFW Commissioners.....Sign our petition.

The District will be presenting its case for a rule change to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. This will happen at the Commission's **October 4, 2013 meeting in Newport at the Hallmark Inn**. The meeting starts at 8 am, and the public forum will be early on the agenda. Letters can be sent on the Districts behalf to the Commission in advance of this meeting. A sample letter has been provided on the reverse. Letters can also be emailed to: odfw.commission@state.or.us

September 24, 2013

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing you to express my support of The Devils Lake Water Improvement District and the watershed based restoration plan called the Devils Lake Plan. This plan devised over the course of many years and with input from a wide range of stakeholders was formally adopted by the District in March 2011. The plan calls for restoration of Devils Lake through multiple means with the primary goal being nutrient reduction, through such "External Controls" as shoreline restoration, wetland protection, stormwater management, low impact development, septic tank revitalization, and the eventual sewerage of the lake. Recent successes on these fronts include the creation of the first local improvement district for sewer and road improvements in the watershed in two decades. The District is also partnering with the City of Lincoln City to require septic inspections, which upon completion will be Oregon's second community to have achieved such a program after Dune City on Woahink Lake. The District also continues to offer its Save Our Shorelines Program, offering 75% cost match for property owners to revegetate their shorelines.

While these watershed improvements are vitally important for the long-term restoration of Devils Lake, the District and the Devils Lake Plan recognize the need for ongoing vegetation management achieved through the serial restocking of sterile grass carp. This is needed to maintain the beneficial uses of navigation, public access, and recreation gained from the stockings authorized by the Commission in 1986, 1987 and 1993. Economic prosperity should also be added to this list. The District recently completed a report detailing the potential economic impact should the lake come to be overrun with weeds again. The potential impact is in the tens of millions of dollars in real estate, tourism, and losses to local governments.

Without meaningful vegetation management in Devils Lake, the lake will undoubtedly return to being choked with aquatic weeds. If that should happen the hundreds of thousands of dollars already invested in the lake will be lost, millions more will be lost in the future. Further more, the next generation will inherit a lake again plagued with nuisance aquatic weeds, and not only will Devils Lake become unusable for the vast majority of Oregonians, the work of the Preservation Association of Devils Lake, Devils Lake Water Improvement District, and the federal resources from the Clean Lake Program will have been short-lived. Devils Lake needs meaningful ongoing vegetation management today; Grass Carp are an existing and proven method to achieve this and serve as a bridge to the future when watershed based restoration has taken hold and the lake can sustain itself without the need for vegetation control.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Name
Address
City, State, ZIP