

District3

From: District3
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For your information...

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July 18, 2011

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AQUATIC WEED UPDATE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF BOATING AND WATERWAYS

For the many years that *Egeria densa* has been a problem in the Delta's waterways, its importance was never adequately conveyed to the California State Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW). Due to multiple factors, the aquatic weeds in the southern Delta became intolerable in the Summer of 2010.

I gained valuable experience on the issue of invasive water weeds working with former Assemblywoman Lynne Leach in her efforts to address the Water Hyacinth invasion, that is now controlled. With this knowledge, my work as Chair of the Delta Conservancy, and as a member of the Delta Protection Commission, I was able to bring together a cadre of leaders from the local, state and federal levels.

With this focused advocacy and persistence, the Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW), under the leadership of Acting Director Lucia Becerra, made the *Egeria densa* weed problem a priority for the Delta. DBW is using their full arsenal of resources to contain and control the *Egeria densa* in and around Bethel Island and Discovery Bay delta areas. Results to date are very promising as you will see by the recent DBW report below. Please read it and contact our office if you have any questions.

We will continue to see this process through until the Delta, and communities like Discovery Bay and Bethel Island return to the wonderful place they are to live, work and play.

July 7, 2011 Update: *Egeria densa* in Discovery Bay

From: California Department of Boating and Waterways

On June 23, 2011, the Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) treatment team conducted a field visit in Discovery Bay. The treatment team included DBW's environmental scientists and pesticide manager, California's federal nexus with the US Agricultural Research Service who is a noted expert in *Egeria densa* and other invasive plants control, and an herbicide biologist with SEPRO Corporation.

In addition, on June 24, 2011 the treatment team and local representatives, including Contra Costa County Supervisor Mary Nejedly Piepho and Discovery Bay's Manager Rick Howard, conducted a field visit. During these trips *Egeria densa* was examined in all parts of the bay, and plant and water samples were taken.

Based on all of the scientific data that DBW has collected during the course of treatment (which includes more sampling than any other control project that the department can find), the following are the results:

- It is clear that *Egeria densa* is dying back throughout the current treatment area (west side) of Discovery Bay, and DBW expects it to continue dying back over the coming weeks and months.
- The symptoms DBW saw included translucent leaves, dark brown leaves, loss of plant growing tip, loss of leaves, floating plants (which had not been cut by a harvester), and *Egeria densa* canopies which have dropped (sinking).

However, some areas of Discovery Bay are showing the effects of treatment less than others. This is due to several variables including water flows, water temperature, water depth, wind direction, initial amounts of *Egeria densa* and area herbicide levels. Consequently, DBW has modified its treatment plan. DBW now plans to extend its treatment from 12 to 16 weeks, and to increase treatment levels for the areas which have not progressed to the same extent as others.

DBW will continue to conduct its treatment in full compliance with federal and state laws. As you are aware, treating Discovery Bay requires some very difficult balancing because the adjacent agricultural lands receive irrigation water from Discovery Bay.

Other Plants

Currently, many aquatic plants exist in Discovery Bay. For example, floating mats of bright, green filamentous algae are present in many areas of Discovery Bay. This algae is not *Egeria densa*. The algae should float away or dissipate as the *Egeria* canopy collapses.

Certain types of algae can cause a variety of ill effects in humans and pets if consumed. Please use caution with respect to direct consumption of water, algae, and other plant life during outdoor activities. DBW has asked the federal government for permission to treat this algae; however, no approval has been received at this time.

East Side Treatment

DBW's best estimate on the timing is mid-August, when the herbicide can be

used to treat the *Egeria densa* secondary growth cycle. DBW's experience on the west side is being used to develop the east side plan. The proximity to irrigation has been and continues to be a significant factor in Discovery Bay's treatment. The water flows will play heavily into an east side treatment plan. DBW must follow all conditions of its permits, and herbicide levels must be within federally approved levels for water that flows into agricultural crops. Due to permit requirements, the west side and east side of Discovery Bay cannot be treated at the same time. As DBW explores its options for the east side, it will continue to keep the community updated.

Harvesting

DBW is aware that certain residents have hired mechanical harvesters, some who are using machetes to cut *Egeria densa*. Harvesting this plant will only exacerbate the problem, as shreds of the plant float away and re-propagate. *Egeria densa* spreads by fragmentation. The continued use of these harvesters will have a negative effect in controlling *Egeria densa* in Discovery Bay.

DBW has contacted the enforcement arms of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Department of Fish and Game regarding enforcement of laws on non-permitted harvesting which adversely affects water, plants and wildlife.

Short-Term Versus Long-Term

As you are aware Discovery Bay has experienced many years of *Egeria densa* infestation. DBW's treatment this year is the best solution for addressing the problem in 2011. Any belief that the treatment is NOT working is NOT based on scientific or observational evidence.

Please note that DBW will not be conducting this type of treatment in the future. This extensive effort (\$3 - \$6 million) was implemented to obtain control of the plant at this time. However, local entities will be responsible for developing a comprehensive vegetative management plan and carrying out treatment in the future.

If DBW's effort is successful this year, the subsequent treatments will be minor in comparison. DBW's role in the future will be primarily to provide technical assistance and supplemental application assistance.

DBW strongly urges the community to maintain patience and consider the short-term v. long-term benefits. DBW thanks the community for all of the updates, information and suggestions.

Should you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the Department of Boating and Waterways at (888) 326-2822 or (916) 263-1331 or by e-mail at pubinfo@dbw.ca.gov.

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