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MISSOURI RIVER

Curly leaf pondweed becoming a nuisance

BISMARCK (AP) — An invasive weed that wraps around boat propellers and the legs of swimmers is causing headaches for Missouri River marinas.

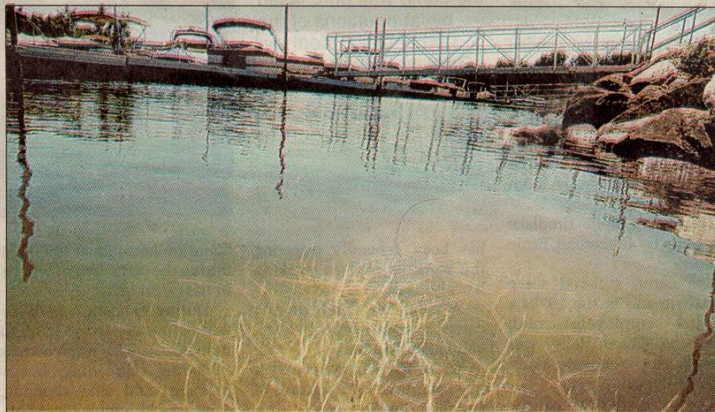
Developer Kevin Turnbow said he first noticed curly leaf pondweed at Southport Marina last year. When it came back this summer, it had taken over an entire shoreline and was creeping toward the middle of the bay, turning the water green.

"And every year it will get worse," he said.

Lynn Schlueter, aquatic nuisance species coordinator for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said the weed is not easy to control.

"There's only one way to get rid of this: De-water the whole Missouri River system," he said. "That should be an eye-opener for people.

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AP Photo

Curly leaf pondweed, foreground, sits just beneath the surface of the water on the western edge of the South Port Marina, Thursday in Bismarck. An invasive weed that wraps around boat propellers and the legs of swimmers is causing headaches for Missouri River marinas. The weed, which came to America from Europe in the 1800s, was first found in Lake Sakakawea in the mid-1990s, said Jason Lee, a Game and Fish fisheries supervisor.

Weeds

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"In other states, it's gotten to a point where they can't deal with it," Schlueter said. "It got ahead of them and they got overwhelmed. This is one catch-up you just can't do. But we can still stay ahead of it here."

A committee has been formed to manage nuisance water weeds, with representatives from various state agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. But Jeff Olson, a program manager for the state Agriculture Department, said the committee is still getting

up to speed.

Chemical control of curly leaf pondweed is expensive, and harvesting it might be the best option, Olson said. But Turnbow said weed-harvesting machinery is expensive, costing as much as \$200,000.

"It'll be back worse next year at all the marinas," he said.

The weed, which came to America from Europe in the 1800s, was first found in Lake Sakakawea in the mid-1990s, said Jason Lee, a Game and Fish fisheries supervisor. It has moved south of Garrison Dam the past three years.

"It's unfortunate that it ended up in the state," Olson said. "It's here to stay."