

## sierk braam

Vancouver lake is an important asset, not just to migrating birds from South America and Canada but also to the community of Vancouver and people up and down the West Coast and Canada who come for recreation, sporting events, birdwatching and hunting. Unfortunately, the lake has been poorly maintained and has become polluted with invasive species of milfoil and deadly blue green algae. The lake has become un-useable for most of the summer months, when it is most in demand for recreation including, swimming, kayaking, paddle boarding, rowing, sailing and other water related activity.

People exposed to water containing cyanobacterial toxins suffer allergic reactions, such as asthma, eye irritation, rashes, and blisters around the mouth and nose. Cyanobacterial toxins and also severely affect the liver, the nervous system and the kidneys. Animals, birds, and fish can also be poisoned by high levels of toxin-producing cyanobacteria.

Surface scums, which occur with increasing frequency at Vancouver Lake. represent a specific hazard to human health because of their particularly high toxin contact. This can be deadly to pets and children playing in or near the water.

Large mats of milfoil are blocking sunlight from reaching other submerged plants, killing them, and depleting oxygen levels in the water which hurts fish and other aquatic animals. The plant not only destroys ecosystems but also inhibits recreational water activities, as the dense mats of milfoil make boating or swimming impossible. Furthermore, these large clusters of plant matter are the perfect breeding grounds for mosquitoes, more bad news for those who visit lakes.

Vancouver Lake holds many sporting events that are regional draws. Sailing and rowing regattas attract people from all up and down the West Coast and Canada. These people spend money on restaurants and hotels in the area. There are walking and biking events, triathlons, and canoe, kayak, paddle board events. If the lake is too poisonous to safely use, these organized events will take thousands of people and their spending elsewhere.

It is a real shame that our children can not swim in the lake, but also that summer camps for sailing, rowing and Parks and Recreation are either cancelled or the kids watch movies about water sports because their lake is too contaminated to actually use for water sports. They also lose out on exposure to, and appreciation for, all of the wildlife in and around the lake; wildlife which itself is in danger of dying because of the poor condition of this important water resource and nature preserve.