

Soren Roth

Historic Vancouver Lake is dying. Considered the first habitable location by Lewis and Clark on their famous trail, the lake has been subject to many insults and now is degrading rapidly from milfoil infestation and accelerating blue green algae blooming.

It was from the western bluff between the Columbia and Vancouver Lake that Lewis and Clark first spotted the head of the Willamette (it took them three attempts to find it, according to indigenous lore). The lake was 50 feet deep and teeming with life. After superfund designation and cleanup in the 80s, the lake seemed to recover to a degree. But now it is undeniably dying. Year over year, milfoil has sprawled out across the south end of the lake. With decreased drainage from the encroachment of the Port of Vancouver, the water has become stagnant, and in the summer algal blooms are the norm, not the exception.

The lake needs more hydroflux, it doesn't have as much water coming into it as it did before. Due to unintended changes to drainage from the Port's encroachment, more water flow needs to be enabled through engineering.

And it needs to be dredged to a deeper basin to support more diverse biology, hydrodynamics, and human enjoyment.

This historic lake is dying. In the past three years the changes are undeniable.