

Discovery Bay reclamation district looks at handling water weeds

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The reclamation district that handles Discovery Bay's levees is looking to define its role in handling the growing problem of aquatic weeds in town waterways.

Trustees on the Discovery Bay Reclamation and Drainage Maintenance District agreed last week that weeds in Willow Lake, the lone body of water that doesn't connect to the Delta, are the district's responsibility.

However, the extent to which the district should remove the weeds remains unclear.

"There's nothing that specifically says what the district should do," trustee Sean O'Toole said. "We have to find what the right balance is of a good use of funds and what is realistic."

The reclamation district owns the small lake in the middle of town and has the proper permits to use authorized chemicals to slow its growth. It treated the lake last year to remove the plants.

"That is our baby, we can do whatever treatment we want," district manager Jeff Conway said.

Growth of the invasive species in the deep water surrounding the unincorporated East Contra Costa town is another issue.

The California Department of Boating and Waterways is the only group that can use pesticides in the San Joaquin Delta. Local groups can lobby for the aquatic nuisance to be eradicated, but not much else.

The reclamation district has not assisted the state or put any chemicals in the Delta, Conway said.

After much intense coaxing by Contra Costa officials and local residents,

the state applied a herbicide to treat the evasive *Egeria densa* in the Delta this past spring. The South American plant often used in aquariums covers about 12 percent of the Delta.

The other weed that affects state waterways is water hyacinth.

Weeds in the waterways of Discovery Bay are down right now, likely because of the colder winter season, Conway said.

It remains uncertain if the state will fund removing the Delta weeds next year, he said.

At the suggestion of trustee Pete Hansen, the district plans to hold a workshop early next year to discuss the water weed issue.

"We need to address if we should be in the weed control business," Hansen said at a Dec. 1 meeting.

The district has an operating budget of about \$1 million to operate and maintain about 19 miles of area levees.

"Everyone on the board wants to try to help, but we don't want to jeopardize our other responsibilities," O'Toole said.

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