



Aquatic Vegetation Management in South Dakota

Introduction: As sunlight passes through the water column to suitable substrate, the growth of aquatic vegetation is likely to occur. This is a natural process, and aquatic vegetation is an important component of healthy ecosystems. Aquatic vegetation provides fish habitat, produces dissolved oxygen and indicates overall system health. However, in excess, it can impact recreation and cause fish kills. Managing aquatic vegetation can be a challenging endeavor and certain actions may come with required approvals from regulatory agencies.

Removal and Control Methods

Manual: Hand removal. No permits required and can be done as needed using a variety of manual tools.

Mechanical: Commercial harvesting of aquatic vegetation generally involves a boat with a cutter on the front. Vegetation is cut, piled on the deck, then offloaded for disposal. For lakes where the bottom is state-owned (meandered lakes), a commercial harvester is required to have a permit issued by the South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands.

Additionally, if mechanical removal involves equipment, such as an excavator, that may impact sediments, a Water Resource Enhancement or Restoration Project permit is required through the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources:

<https://danr.sd.gov/OfficeOfWater/SurfaceWaterQuality/waterqualitystandards/swqrestoration.aspx>.

Biological: Grass Carp. Permits are only issued for waters completely on private land. For specific information, please contact your local Area Fisheries Supervisor.

Chemical: Herbicides. State law requires approval from South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks prior to use, for landowners, lakeshore residents, and commercial applicators.

Chemical Plant Control Permit Application:

Go to: <https://gfp.sd.gov/forms/>; select "Resource Management"; select "Aquatic Resource Permitting; select "Chemical Plant Control".

Example plant identification resources:

Iowa DNR: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/media/273/download?inline>

Texas A and M AgriLife Extension: <https://aquaplant.tamu.edu/>

Contact Us

Please contact your local Area Fisheries Supervisor or Aquatic Habitat and Access Biologist (<https://gfp.sd.gov/contactus/>) with any questions you may have about aquatic vegetation management and permitting requirements.