



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Public Works and Transportation Committee
From: Chad Paulin,
Director, Climate and Environment
Re: 2025 Provincial Pesticide Use Permit Renewal Application




Date: March 19, 2025
File: 10-6160-07-01/2025-
Vol 01

Staff Recommendation

That the comments regarding a provincial Pesticide Use Permit application to manage invasive cordgrass and perennial pepperweed outlined in the report titled "Provincial Pesticide Use Permit Renewal Application", dated March 19, 2025, from the Director, Climate and Environment, be endorsed for submission to the provincial Ministry of Forests.

Chad Paulin, M. Sc., P. Ag
Director, Climate and Environment
(604-247-4672)

Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO: Parks Services	CONCURRENCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER 
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO 

Staff Report

Origin

The provincial Ministry of Forests has applied to renew a regional Pesticide Use Permit to continue the management of two highly invasive plant species in coastal foreshore areas across the Lower Mainland. The permit application process requires consultation with affected groups including the City of Richmond. The Ministry of Forests are seeking the City's comments as part of the consultation process that is scheduled from February 28, 2025, to April 29, 2025. This report summarizes the Ministry of Forests' proposed treatment program, renewal application and outlines comments that will be submitted to the Ministry of Forests, if endorsed.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #1 Proactive in Stakeholder and Civic Engagement:

Proactive stakeholder and civic engagement to foster understanding and involvement and advance Richmond's interests.

1.1 Continue fostering effective and strategic relationships with other levels of government and Indigenous communities.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #3 A Safe and Prepared Community:

Community safety and preparedness through effective planning, strategic partnerships and proactive programs.

3.1 Advance proactive, sustainable, and accelerated flood protection in collaboration with other governments and agencies.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #5 A Leader in Environmental Sustainability:

Leadership in environmental sustainability through innovative, sustainable and proactive solutions that mitigate climate change and other environmental impacts.

5.1 Continue to demonstrate leadership in proactive climate action and environmental sustainability.

5.2 Support the preservation and enhancement of Richmond's natural environment.

Analysis

Cordgrass is an aquatic grass that establishes on intertidal mudflats and has the ability to reduce open habitat for shorebirds; outcompete native vegetation; and alter the natural functions of estuaries. Three species of invasive cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*, *S. densiflora*, *S. patens*) have migrated north from California since the 1980's, and the first infestations were detected in BC in 2003. Cordgrass has since spread aggressively in Boundary Bay, Robert's Bank, Burrard Inlet and Puget Sound. Cordgrass was identified within Richmond's municipal boundaries in 2013 and again 2024.

Perennial pepperweed (pepperweed) was detected in the intertidal areas of Boundary Bay in 2023 and was likely introduced to North America through shipping activities. It tolerates a range of saline and alkaline soils and often invades sensitive areas, such as marsh lands. Pepperweed spreads quickly and can reduce suitable nesting habitats for birds. Pepperweed has been added to the Ministry of Forests' pesticide use permit renewal application for treatment alongside cordgrass. There are currently no detections of pepperweed within or near Richmond's municipal boundaries.

Provincial Management Program

The Ministry of Forests, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, have been monitoring, mapping, and managing invasive cordgrass infestations in the Lower Mainland since 2003. Early management approaches, including excavation and light-shading techniques, all yielded poor results leading to the introduction of herbicides in 2013. The Ministry of Forests integrated herbicide management approach has been successful in limiting the spread of cordgrass in Boundary Bay, Robert's Bank, and Burrard Inlet by reports of declining populations since herbicide was introduced.

The Province regulates pesticide use in BC pursuant to the *Weed Control Act* and the *Integrated Pest Management Act*. The *Weed Control Act* is administered by the Ministry of Forests and requires all landowners, including municipalities, to control the spread of noxious weeds. The *Integrated Pest Management Act* is administered by the Ministry of Environment and Parks and is used to regulate the use of herbicides to manage invasive species, including noxious weeds listed in the *Weed Control Act*. The Ministry of Forests' current pesticide use permit, renewed in 2022, will expire on June 28, 2025. The Ministry of Forests is seeking comments from the City on the proposed renewal application.

Proposed Pesticide Use Permit Renewal

Staff have reviewed the proposed renewal application in conjunction with past pesticide use permits and associated comments endorsed by the City in 2019 and 2022. The total area proposed in the 2025 application includes a geographic boundary that covers all intertidal areas of the Fraser River Delta and Baynes Sound, including within the municipal boundaries of Richmond (Attachment 1). The proposed 2025 boundary has been extended in this renewal application to include areas at risk of introduction. Within the boundary, a maximum treatment area of 2.5 hectares is proposed. Consistent with previous permits, herbicide will be manually applied directly to individual cordgrass plants during the growing season (typically July to September). The renewal application notes that herbicide application will only be conducted by

certified pesticide applicators and strict treatment and monitoring practices that protect sensitive intertidal conditions will be followed. Staff acknowledge that this program is regionally-significant and has reduced the regional spread of cordgrass and pepperweed by incorporating herbicide in its integrated management approach. The following comments are recommended for endorsement and submission to the Ministry of Forests:

- That the City receive a copy of the permit and its conditions if issued by the Ministry of Environment and Parks, and that the conditions of the pesticide use permit, including best management practices, are strictly enforced. This includes ensuring that appropriate signage is posted at treatment sites in accordance with regulatory requirements;
- That the City be notified, within the same growing season, of any future records of cordgrass or pepperweed within or near Richmond's municipal boundaries and that the City receive an annual treatment summary when available;
- That the City be notified in advance of planned treatment within Richmond's municipal boundaries, pursuant to the notification requirements outlined within the permit, if approved; and
- That the Province provide the City with provincial contact information for public inquiries related to the proposed treatment program, including those concerning *Spartina* and pepperweed distribution in Richmond, public notifications, herbicide use and herbicide applications.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Forests is currently managing invasive species of plants, cordgrass and perennial pepperweed, regionally with the use of herbicides under an active pesticide use permit that will expire on June 28, 2025. The Ministry of Forests is seeking comments from the City related to the 2025 pesticide use permit renewal application that will allow treatment to continue until 2028 if provincially approved. The Ministry of Forests' historical monitoring data implies that their management efforts have significantly reduced the spread of the cordgrass since the inclusion of herbicide. Staff have reviewed the application and recommend that the comments be forwarded to the Ministry of Forests, if endorsed.



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Att. 1: Municipal Boundaries for the Regional Pesticide Use Permit (2025 – 2028)

