



Invasive Vegetation Control in the Highlands

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Licensed Herbicide Operator applying herbicide using a boom spray

The Raw Water System in the Highlands includes the Highlands Reservoir and approximately 27 miles of canals, all of which requires attentive effort to minimize the growth of invasive aquatic and shoreline vegetation along the System. The Highlands staff are trained and licensed by the State of Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to properly use appropriate herbicides and other specialized tools in their maintenance activities. The Highlands staff diligently monitor, budget for treatment, and ensure that maintenance to eliminate or control the various species is adequate to ensure the uninterrupted flow of water supplies for this System. Through monthly canal inspections, staff records all locations of invasive species and areas requiring treatment. Work orders are then issued to further address the areas of concern. In order to prevent clogging at the intakes of customers from the dead vegetation and the change in water quality due to the breakdown of the dead vegetation, staff must ensure timely and open communication occurs on scheduled application activities with industrial, municipal, and irrigation customers.

Application Process

In order to obtain an approved herbicide license, staff must pass several tests, including those on: General Knowledge, Rules and Regulations, Aquatic Herbicides, and Right-of-Ways. After all tests are initially passed, staff must complete five hours of continuing education yearly to maintain their license. Additionally, the Highlands must keep

on file a specific and updated inventory of all herbicides purchased and stored for future application, a daily log of products sprayed, and the specific location that spraying was required. The responsibility to manage the availability of the herbicide products and safe application lies with the licensed staff members.

In order to properly apply aquatic herbicides, staff must have access to the necessary application equipment and proper personal protective equipment. Depending on the particular method of application used, staff must follow the directions on the label for personal protection, including wearing: long sleeve shirts, long pants, hats, safety glasses, rubber aprons, and protective rubber gloves. Application equipment includes: an all-terrain vehicle equipped with a spray rig and a hand spray nozzle, a broadcaster for granulated formulations, and a boom sprayer that will reach the side or rear to further distribute the product.

Other equipment that may also be used includes backpack sprayers, hand-held pump sprayers, and a trailer mounted spray rig for handgun applications. Proper personal protective equipment and application equipment allows for a safe and more effective application in the targeted areas. Other equipment that may also be used includes backpack sprayers, hand-held pump sprayers, and a trailer mounted spray rig for handgun applications. Proper personal protective equipment and application equipment allows for a safe and more effective application in the targeted areas.



Licensed Herbicide Operator spraying a fence line using a hand-sprayer from an all-terrain vehicle



Product Storage area for the ongoing treatment of invasive plant species along the Raw Water System

when cooler water temperatures exist. The drip-injection method has been used for the north area of the Highlands Reservoir, along with occasional boom and nozzle spraying and the broadcasting of granulated formulations. With assistance of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, grass carp were recently introduced to help in the control of Hydrilla, American Pondweed, and Coontail throughout the System and these plants are now under control. Staff carefully considers the methods available and applies the most feasible and cost-effective approach for targeting the areas identified.

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