



Supplied photo by Mitchell Samborski

St. Boniface Golf Course is one of three courses that has a permit to pump water from the Seine River to water its greens.

To pump, or not to pump?



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“Is it okay for people to remove water from the Seine River?”

Every year, people ask Save Our Seine this question. They may want to water a small garden. They may notice a pump leading from the river to a construction site or a golf course.

My answer is “Yes ... and no.”

It depends on the amount and the timing.

The province is responsible for Manitoba’s rivers. This includes allocating how much water people may remove from rivers. In order to take proper care of the Seine River, the province needs to know how much will be removed and how it will be used.

Watering a lawn or garden beside your house is considered domestic use. Farmers can use river water to produce farm products (agricultural uses) or to water crops (irrigation purposes). The city is allowed to use the river for a variety of purposes, including watering streets, walks, paths, boulevards, lawns, and gardens (municipal uses). Using river water at a building site would be considered industrial or “other” purposes.

Before putting a pump into the river for any purpose, contact the Water Use Licensing Branch of Manitoba Water Stewardship (204-945-3983). You will need a

permit to remove more than 25,000 litres per day. A small utility pump from the hardware store can pump this amount in two hours. A large pump can do it in 35 minutes.

The three golf courses along the urban Seine River (Niakwa, Windsor Park, and St. Boniface) have permits to use the river to water their greens. Each course has a permit to extract water at a different rate (ranging from 1.5 to 4.6 million litres per day) and for a different length of time (between 15 and 67 days).

If all three courses extracted their daily maximum on the same day, the combined amount would be 9.9 million litres, or about 29,500 bathtubs full of water.

This is most likely to happen during a summer drought. Removing such a large amount of water during a drought, even with permits, could harm the river. Because the Seine River is so small, it would lower the water level and could cause stretches to dry up completely.

Before pumping, take a moment to consider the river. What is more important — maintaining lush grass, saving money on a truckload of water for a construction project, or the health of the Seine River?

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