

LAKE WATER QUALITY ALERT 3/16/19 by Mike Backus

As we all know, our lake is at its highest level in recorded history. Positive as that is compared to the years it was very low, we possibly face some “significant” water quality issues in 2019 because of that lake level.

Water is now on shoreline areas that have never seen water. It has caused a substantial damage to some but it also has introduced a significant amount of nutrients into the lake. Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen come from sediments, manure, pet wastes improperly maintained septic systems and misapplication of fertilizers on lawns and farm fields.

Phosphorus is a nutrient that is important for the growth of plant life in freshwater lakes. Under certain conditions, however, excess phosphorus can cause algae to grow out of control or “bloom”, making a lake look like pea soup! Excess weeds and algae are harmful to fish and make a lake less attractive for swimming and boating. Worst case is the introduction of blue-green algae which can cause noxious odors when it decays. It can also produce natural toxins that can be dangerous to animals and humans if ingested. This algae is what closes beaches in Madison and in other areas.

As you can see the high water last season may disrupt the health of our lake. If the summer floods were not bad enough, it got worse this late Fall and early winter! After the ground froze we got a large amount of rain which did not soak into the ground but rather ran off into the lake carrying even more nutrients into the lake. The lake level went even higher than after the flood. Spring will be a time for us to be very watchful on how the lake reacts to all of this change!

What can each of us do to help this situation?

- 1) Maintain your required buffer zone to stop/filter additional run off into the lake.
- 2) Don't leave animal waste in your yard that may wash into the lake.
- 3) Do not use fertilizer with Phosphorus (State Law in Wisconsin).
- 4) Avoid fertilizing within 200 feet of the shoreline to prevent added nitrogen from getting into the lake.
- 5) Address visible runoff on your property to prevent run off from reaching the lake.
- 6) Be watchful and notify Mike Backus (414-507-7211) if you observe water quality issues you have not seen before.