

## ANTRIM

# High phosphorus levels in lake

By **ABBY KESSLER**

Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

A group concerned about high phosphorus levels in an Antrim lake are awaiting the governor and executive council's approval of federal grant money for developing a program aimed at improving water quality.

Joan Gorga, a member of the group concerned about water quality on Gregg Lake, said in 2014 the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services listed the water body as threatened or impaired due to its phosphorus levels. She said the department also ranked it as a high recovery potential, which means that water degradation can be slowed.

Gorga said she has lived on the lake since 1955. She said in 2015 people started commenting about increased algae in the water.

"People really started noticing algae blooms," Gorga said in an interview with the Ledger-Transcript.

Ben Pratt, who is an Antrim resident, said he kayaks on the lake. He said he has noticed an increasing amount of algae in the water body in recent years. That was one of the reasons he started helping test the water this year.

Gorga said the volunteers have been testing the water for about 20 years. She said in the past, the group only tested the lake once a year. Last year, they ramped up that effort to three times, and this past summer they tested it seven times.

She said volunteers test the inlet, outlet and middle part of the lake at various depth levels. Once they have collected those samples, they send them off to a lab at the state's Department of Environmental

Services.

Gorga said the lake isn't worse than any others in the area but that dissolved oxygen levels are "very low," especially in deeper levels of the lake. That's concerning Gorga said because fish like to hide out in cooler water temperatures. Right now, she said, dissolved oxygen levels are so low that it's hard for aquatic life to survive.

That's why the group decided to apply for the EPA grant. If state officials approve the grant, it would total \$25,000, the bulk of which would be used to compensate a professional to advise the group.

Gorga said if the funding goes through, they hope to understand what is contributing to high phosphorus levels.

"Part of the reason for doing the whole budget management plan and study is that we don't know what's causing the high phosphorus levels," Gorga told select board members. "If there was one spot where you could say, 'Oh, look it's all green by this house you could say it's that person's septic system and they need to do something.'"

But that's not the case.

"It's non-point source which means that we don't know what's causing it," she said.

She said EPA funding would help locate the largest contributing factors to the issue.

Gorga said if they receive this grant, they would then be eligible for additional funding that could be directed toward more costly projects like culverts, water drainage management plans, and retention basins that would prevent silt from entering the water. Those measures could help improve the lake's water quality.