

ANTRIM

A clean future for Gregg Lake

Public urged to give input on improving water quality

By **ABBE HAMILTON**
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The public is invited to learn about and provide input on the plan to remediate Gregg Lake's water quality impairments at a meeting on Dec. 3. The Gregg Lake Watershed Management Plan Committee will be sharing the goals they set for the Antrim lake in July, and discussing the results of the 70-page water quality analysis they completed this year.

"We decided to start doing this Watershed Management Plan to see what we had to do to get the algae levels down," said Joan Gorga of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Having a completed watershed management plan is a prerequisite for certain grant opportunities, Gorga said, which could fund construction and educational projects aimed at keeping pollutants out of the water.

The lake was initially listed as impaired in 2004 due to elevated algae levels and low dissolved oxygen, but Gorga said there were no visible problems in the lake until recently. "Starting in 2015, we we started to see clumps of filamentous algae," she said. "Last year, for the first time ever, we found cyanobacteria in our phytoplankton sampling, which we've never seen before."

She said the cyanobacteria bloom was too minor to pose a health hazard, and filamentous algae is more of a nuisance species, but she was worried about the health of the lake declining any more. The committee received a state grant to develop a management plan in 2017. Now that the water quality analysis is complete, Gorga said the committee understands the specific pollutants that need to be reduced, and the meeting will help to clarify how to proceed.

Phosphorus and sediment are the two biggest contributors to the lake's impairment, Gorga said. "By 2028, the end of our ten year [plan], we want to have cut back on 60 pounds

per year of phosphorous loading," she said, and offset 15 pounds a year through conservation easements. She described it as a "pretty aggressive goal," but one that would ultimately take Gregg Lake off the state's impaired waters list by reducing chlorophyll a levels in the lake by thirty percent.

Mitigation will involve efforts from some of the town's departments as well as lakefront landowners. "There's no one big source," Gorga said, and that the upcoming meeting is for sharing the committee's recommendations and receiving public input. "After we have this meeting, we'll put together our action plan and then it's a matter of... setting a timeline," she said.

"We have to encourage a lot of individual private landowners," she said, to "live with as little impact to the lake as you can." Gorga anticipates educating landowners in the watershed about the best practices to minimize shoreline erosion and nutrient pollution, including lawn fertilizer reduction and upgrading and maintaining septic systems.

The town's Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Water and Sewer Commission personnel have already been involved in the conversation, Gorga said, and there are lots of opportunities for town efforts, such as projects mitigating road runoff, to contribute to a solution. She said she's hoping to do something at the town beach and boat launch to cut back on runoff.

Already, Gorga said the committee's efforts to develop a watershed management plan have attracted regional attention. "Big lake associations will raise \$100,000 and pay someone to develop a plan," she said, whereas it's rare for a small town to complete a plan with mostly volunteer hours and a small state grant.

Some good news, according to Gorga, is that the lake doesn't appear to have a problem with nitrogen levels, or problematic levels of road salts.

The meeting is set for Dec. 3 at 6:30 p.m. in Antrim's Little Town Hall.