

Gregg Lake Watershed Management Plan

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The Gregg Lake Watershed Management Plan Committee is making progress. We have now:

- Completed a full water quality analysis
- Set a water quality goal for phosphorus
- Identified current and future pollution sources
- Estimated the pollution reduction needed to reach our water quality goal

Our next challenge is to formulate an action plan, which is supposed to be a reasonable and achievable ten-year plan to reach the water quality goal we set in July. We'll be laying out options and recommendations at a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Little Town Hall on December 3. Please come and participate in the decision-making process.

Why do we need a watershed management plan?

Imagine what losing Gregg Lake would mean to the Town of Antrim.

If we continue along our current path, we may well begin to see beach closures due to cyanobacteria. Last year we measured cyanobacteria for the first time during our summer water testing and saw our first-ever suspected cyanobacteria bloom. Cyanobacteria can produce a range of toxins that can have severe effects on organs, such as the lungs, liver and brain, and beaches are closed when cyanobacteria counts get high enough to be of health concern to humans, as well as dogs and other animals that might come in contact with the toxins. Thankfully, we didn't observe a cyanobacteria bloom in Gregg Lake this year, but Manahan Beach at Franklin Pierce Lake was closed for six days, Dublin Pond beach for five days, and Scobie Pond beach in Frankestown for ten days this summer due to cyanobacteria blooms.

For the past four years, we've seen widespread nuisance blooms of filamentous brown or green algae in Gregg Lake. While these algae don't produce the toxins that cyanobacteria can secrete, they do affect swimming, boating and fishing activities on our lake. These nuisance algal blooms will

increase with increases in plant nutrients, such as phosphorus, contributed by erosion, runoff from more frequent and intense storms and shoreline development.

Fecal bacteria counts at the town beach, although still generally quite low, have increased significantly since measurements began in 1985. The public beach was last closed due to high fecal bacteria in 2012, but again, nearby beaches have lost summer days to high fecal bacteria counts: Manahan Beach was closed for two days, Island Pond Beach in Stoddard for four, and Middle Beach at Greenfield State Park for sixteen days this summer.

Our environmental consultants predicted that full build-out of the Gregg Lake watershed, meaning reaching the maximum possible number of dwellings based on buildable land and current zoning regulations, will occur between 2180 and 2214. While these dates seem far in the future, modeling predicts that the concentration of phosphorus in the lake water will more than double in that time, making it likely that the already-present algae and threatening cyanobacteria blooms will increasingly dominate the lake.

The time to act is now, when we're just beginning to see deterioration of water quality. It's much easier to reverse degradation in its early stages, and there are many actions we can take now to address the losses of water quality that we're already seeing. Our water quality and watershed studies show that there is not going to be one silver bullet here. We have to take a multi-pronged approach that will take commitment from all lake users, watershed residents and the town, in order to protect the resource we have in Gregg Lake for the long term.



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