

## Wonder Lake Algae Bloom Update – August 6, 2021

The hot and very dry summer of 2021 has caused lakes and rivers across Northern Illinois, including Wonder Lake, to experience significant algae blooms. While some degree of algae growth is perfectly normal, large-scale algae blooms can also contain “harmful” algae that can cause health issues.

Unfortunately, the presence or extent of harmful algae species cannot be determined visually. The only way to conclusively determine if an algae bloom contains harmful species of algae is by having the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) collect water samples and send them to their lab in Springfield for analysis.

At the request of the MPOA, IEPA staff came out to Wonder Lake on July 21, 2021 to collect water samples at four locations on the lake. Once the samples arrive at the IEPA lab, it generally takes another 7 to 10 days for them to make a determination of whether harmful algae are present, and if so, if they are at a level to raise health safety issues.

**The results of the IEPA lab analysis of the July 21 water samples indicated that the presence of “*microcystin*”, one of the most common harmful algae species in our area was NOT DETECTED.**

While this is obviously good news, it is also important to remember that those results were from samples collected over two weeks ago. A number of reports have since been made to the MPOA about an on-going algae bloom, and with the current temperature forecast, and significant lack of rainfall, it will likely continue for a while. The only thing that will make this issue go away is cooler temperatures and a lot more rain. For much of the summer, Wonder Lake has only been receiving one-third of the normal inflow from Nippersink Creek. The reduction in water volume moving through the lake is a significant contributing factor.

**As such, all the MPOA can do at this point is to advise folks to avoid water contact in those areas of the lake where obvious algae blooms are occurring and concentrating, typically along downwind shorelines and in coves.**

### ***“IF IN DOUBT, STAY OUT”.***

If water contact cannot be avoided, shower immediately afterwards. The activities that put you in contact with the water — and the amount of time you spend on them — will affect your exposure to algae toxins. Children will generally be more affected than adults.

| <u>Activity</u>  | <u>Level of Exposure to Algae Toxins</u> |
|--|--|
| Drinking (incidental or intentional)                                 | Highest                                  |
| Swimming, diving, water skiing, windsurfing, tubing, paddle boarding | High                                     |
| Canoeing, kayaking, sailing, personal watercraft                     | Moderate                                 |
| Fishing, boating, fish consumption                                   | Low                                      |

It is very important to keep dogs out of the water, as they are particularly susceptible to adverse impacts from harmful algae (if present). Pets, especially dogs, are susceptible to harmful algae because they are relatively small and tend to swallow more water while swimming and playing (e.g., retrieving a ball from the water). Dogs may ingest algae if they lick their coats after leaving the water. They are also less deterred by green, smelly water that may contain harmful algae. To reduce your animal's exposure to blue-green algae:

- Don't let them swim or drink where there is noticeable algae in the water or scum on the shore.
- If they swam in water that could have harmful algae, rinse them off with fresh water immediately. Don't let them lick their fur.

As we get any additional information, we will be posting it to the MPOA website [wlmppoa.org](http://wlmppoa.org) There is some general information from IEPA already posted under "Lake Status" on the MPOA home page, where a PDF can be downloaded.