

Lakes Program News and Activities

An Algae Primer

Summer is a time when we start to see more frequent algae blooms in our lakes as a result of high temperatures and added nutrients, like nitrogen and phosphorus, entering lakes through stormwater.

Algae are aquatic plants that are found in three forms: single cells (which make the water cloudy), colonies (which often appear as clumps), and filaments (which look like hair). Some species are A macro algae, where individual cells get together to form what looks like a regular plant, which is often mistaken for hydrilla.

Algae are naturally found in surface waters and they can benefit a lake's fishery by providing food to the bottom of the food chain and young fish. Lakes with low levels of algae tend to have less fish and therefore they have lower Aproductivity.

Algae numbers naturally increase 2-3 times per year, and large increases in numbers are referred to as algae Ablooms. Blooms can be quite severe in lakes that have excessive nutrient pollution, leading to water that looks like pea soup, or worse.

Blooms can also result in fish kills.

Algae, as photosynthesizers, produce oxygen while they are actively growing. However, large amounts of algae can die suddenly after a few cloudy days and bacteria will go to work on decomposing the dead algae. This decomposition requires oxygen, and therefore there may be a sudden drop in oxygen that can suffocate fish.

Another issue related to algae are health problems that may be caused by certain types of algae, called Acyanobacteria, or blue green algae. Cyanobacteria are in fact bacteria that can perform photosynthesis.

some species can release nerve and liver toxins when they die. These algae can also remove nitrogen from the air through A nitrogen fixation. Therefore, they can bloom when only phosphorus concentrations are high - other algae need both high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the water.

Other Ongoing Lake Projects

Lakes Manager Clell Ford has applied for two grants from the South Florida Water Management District. The first grant is a request for funding of a water quality investigation on Lake Istokpoga to determine sources of nutrient pollution. The second grant requests funding to clean out the canals around the lake, removing detritus that has built up over many years, impeding navigation.

Our Septic System education program is scheduled to begin in the coming weeks. Homeowners will be invited to seminars to learn how to maintain their septic systems to protect the environment, so call us if you would like to schedule a presentation.

Also, the Highlands County Lakes Association is accepting proposals for lake restoration activities to be funded by dollars from the new tourist tax.



Prevention Of Cruelty To Piranhas: A video dealer in England advertised a large discount on his systems to anyone who was brave (?) enough to snatch a coin from an aquarium filled with hungry piranha. The English equivalent of the SPCA in the United States got into the act and demanded the dealer be sure the customer's hands were cleaned so as to prevent food poisoning in any piranha that might bite a dirty hand.
