

Fish die-off is 'natural' but should be reported

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Dead fish are turning up in Prior Lake due to bacteria, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

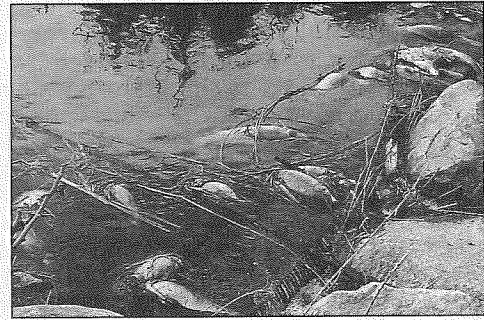
The fish kills are consistent with die-off from columnaris bacteria, the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District also confirmed.

Residents also observed fish kills in May 2014 on both Prior and Spring lakes. Testing confirmed that columnaris bacteria was the cause of the die-offs in Carls (McMahon) and Cedar Lakes, and it is suspected that the bacteria also caused the die-off in Prior and Spring lakes.

Watershed officials noted that the die-off is "a natural occurrence and only affects a small percentage of the fish populations in our lakes."

There is no known cure, but the fish kills are believed to have little effect on the long-term health of fish populations.

Columnaris disease is caused by a bacteria that is constantly present in fish populations, but does not typically cause death except during spring spawning season when fish are stressed. Most commonly observed die-offs are of crappie and sunfish populations.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Prior is among the metro area lakes on the state's list affected by columnaris bacteria.

Symptoms of Columnaris disease are discolored patches, sloughing of scales and eroded gill filaments. The DNR recommends that diseased fish not be consumed, but healthy fish from the same lake can be safely eaten.

Those who observe large fish die-offs on any of the lakes, should look at the condition of the fish and check for any signs of Columnaris disease, and then Report any findings within the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District to Maggie Karschnia, water resources project manager, at (952) 447-9808 or mkarschnia@plslwd.org.