

MPCA could change Spring Lake water quality standard

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The public is invited to comment on a proposal by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to revise the water quality standard for phosphorus load on Spring Lake.

A hearing is set for 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 14 at Prior Lake City Hall, 4646 Dakota St. The Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District Board will hear comments regarding the MPCA's consideration of changes to Spring Lake's water quality standard based on recent studies of the lake's Total Maximum Daily Load for phosphorus.

The change would affect the allowable pollutant load allocations for Spring Lake, which would ultimately mean less stringent load reductions for the lake, said Diane Lynch,

If you go

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the watershed district's administrator. MPCA staff maintains that "the beneficial use of aquatic recreation will be achieved and maintained if the proposed site-specific standard is adopted and attained," according to Lynch.

If approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Lynch said, the revision would not impact the district's alu-

minum sulfate ("alum") treatment of Spring Lake, which started in 2013 and will continue over the next few years.

"We'd still be doing all of our projects to protect the lake," Lynch said.

A study of the lake by the watershed district, the MPCA and the EPA was based on the existing water quality standard for phosphorus, which is 40 micrograms per liter. The watershed district has since conducted a lake sediment core study, which found that a site-specific standard of 60 micrograms per liter would be more appropriate for Spring Lake.

According to watershed district staff, the rationale for the site-specific water quality target for Spring Lake centers on estimates of historic in-lake concentrations of total phosphorus dating

back more than 200 years. The study revealed that before European settlement of the area in the mid-1800s and accompanying land-use changes, total phosphorus was approximately 60 micrograms per liter.

"MPCA staff believes it is reasonable to consider this a natural background condition and, therefore, the best phosphorus level that this lake could be expected to achieve," Lynch said.

If the EPA approves the site-specific standard, the lake's Total Maximum Daily Load will need to be revised.

Details of the proposed standard are at www.pca.state.mn.us/mvri9d0. Information on submitting written comments and the comment deadline will be posted on the watershed district's website at www.plslwd.org.