

Stirring up trouble: Solving the carp problem in our lakes

We all want healthy water in our lakes. Clean, clear water brings ample recreational opportunities, provides scenic beauty, and draws wildlife into our region. However, in Spring and Prior Lakes, there are exotic fish at the bottom of our waters that are literally stirring up trouble.

Intentionally introduced into our lakes from Europe and Asia in the 1880s as a game fish, common carp have quickly out-competed our native fish and muddied our waters with their bottom feeding habits, which uproot native plants on which game fish depend. By stirring up the bottom of our lakes, the carp release phosphorus back into the water, also feeding the algae which can cloud the water and increase the potential for algae blooms throughout the summer.

A simple solution? Remove the carp from our lakes. The problem? Finding the fish when they're schooling. Between Spring, Upper Prior, and Lower Prior Lakes, there are over three square miles of lake bottom where the carp can hide, not to mention the many upstream lakes and wetlands to which the carp have access.

In order to solve this problem, the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District was recently awarded a grant funded by the state's Clean Water Partnership Grant Fund through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to use an innovative method to locate and remove a significant portion of the carp in Spring and Prior Lakes. This fall, the District will be catching carp in all three lakes and surgically implanting them with radio tags before releasing them back into the waters. The radio tags will send signals out to a receiver device, tracking the movement of the fish throughout the three lakes and connecting channels. Once the fish begin to congregate during certain times of the year, the District will move quickly to catch and remove the carp from the lakes.

The radio telemetry information will also help the District locate the areas the carp are using to spawn in the spring, located outside of the lakes where there is opportunity to prevent them from spawning. Fish barriers will then be installed to block the carp from entering these spawning areas, ultimately reducing their overall population growth.

"This project will also provide a unique opportu-



Above, a net full of carp is pulled in during a seining operation. Below, a radio tag is implanted into a carp so the schools of fish can be located for removal.

nity for residents to be part of the effort," stated Tony Havranek from WSB & Associates who is working with the District on the carp management project. Interested volunteers will be invited to help mark, count, and sort fish during the removal efforts. The District also hopes to engage the local school district in the project as part of its ongoing education efforts.

Although controlling the carp on the lakes will substantially improve the water quality, it is only one of the many tools that the District is using to keep our lakes as clean and healthy as possible. There is no silver bullet to improving water quality, but as Havranek notes, "This project will deal with phosphorous already in the lakes, while ongoing District projects are helping to reduce the phosphorus entering the lakes each year through runoff. All these efforts combined work together to improve the water quality of Spring Lake and Prior Lakes."



Researchers catch carp and implant radio tags.



Be on the lookout for blue-green algae that may contain toxins

When temperatures climb and the summer sun beats down, conditions are ripe for Minnesota lakes to produce algae blooms. Algae blooms are common throughout the summer, with different species appearing from time to time. Many types of algae are an important part of the food chain, however, some can contain toxins.

Cyanobacteria, better known as blue-green algae, can contain toxins (such as microcystin) that are unsafe for humans and pets. Not all blue-green algae contain toxins, but you should always assume it does. When in doubt, best keep out! It is important to familiarize yourself with blue-green algae so you have a better idea when to avoid the water. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) website (www.pca.state.mn.us) has helpful information about blue-green algae, which can take on different forms, but it has been described as looking like green paint, pea-green soup, or having a blue-green color. It can also have an unpleasant odor.

Adults are usually offended by the site and/or smell of algae which keeps them out of the water. However, children and dogs may not be as averse to the algae, so they need to be watched closely.

The Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District recently learned about some user-friendly test kits that may help indicate if the algae are toxic within 45 minutes. According to Steve Heiskary, an MPCA Water Research Scientist, "... [the test kit] is a cost-effective alternative to sending samples to an outside lab. It provides an indication of presence/absence and relative magnitude of microcystin [but] it does not provide precise quantification." However, these kits are not 100 percent accurate, and there is still a risk if the test shows no

toxin is present. The District does not use nor endorse these kits, but if you are interested in purchasing some for your own use, you can find the kits at www.abrxiskits.com/products/algae-toxins.

There are currently no short-term solutions to fix a blue-green algal bloom. Once a bloom occurs, the only option is to wait for the weather to change — significant rainfall, wind shifts, or cooler temperatures — to disrupt its growth. "With the intermittent periods of rain, followed by high temperatures, blue-green algal blooms will be common on many lakes throughout Minnesota for the remainder of this summer," said Heiskary.

The best long-term solution to decrease occurrences of blue-green algae is to reduce the amount of nutrients being added to the lake. Some ways you can help with this is by reducing your use of fertilizer, cleaning up after your pets, mowing your grass clippings into your yard (rather than onto the street or into the lake), raking up your leaves, using rain barrels to catch roof runoff, and installing a rain garden or shoreline buffer. The District has incentive programs to help defray the costs of rain barrels and installing rain gardens and shoreline buffers.

If you believe you or your pets are experiencing adverse health effects (vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, eye irritation) due to contact with, or ingestion of, lake water/algae, seek medical attention *immediately*. Potential harmful algae blooms should be reported to the MPCA at (651) 757-2419. If you have questions or concerns regarding algae, please contact Jaime Rockney at the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District at jrocknew@plslwd.org or (952) 440-0068.



The dangerous blue-green algae has been described as looking like green paint, pea-green soup, or having a blue-green color. It can also have an unpleasant odor.

Thanks, 4-H Livestock Auction buyers

Scott County 4-H would like to thank the buyers who supported our 4-H members in the 2015 4-H Livestock Auction at the Scott County Fair. With your support, the members will be able to improve their projects and continue their development as future leaders through the 4-H program. The funds also help with educational programming in all areas of 4-H!

Register now for the Scott County Meth Task Force Golf Tournament

Sept. 11 -- 8:30 a.m. "shotgun start" at Stonebrooke Golf Course in Shakopee \$100 registration fee includes 18 holes of golf with a cart and a barbeque lunch.

Register at www.stonebrooke.com and click on "9th Annual Tee It Up for the Task Force."

If you register online by Aug. 15, you'll receive free 18 holes of golf and a golf cart for a future date, courtesy of Stonebrooke.