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Recent Blue-Green Algae Alert on Lac Courte Oreilles

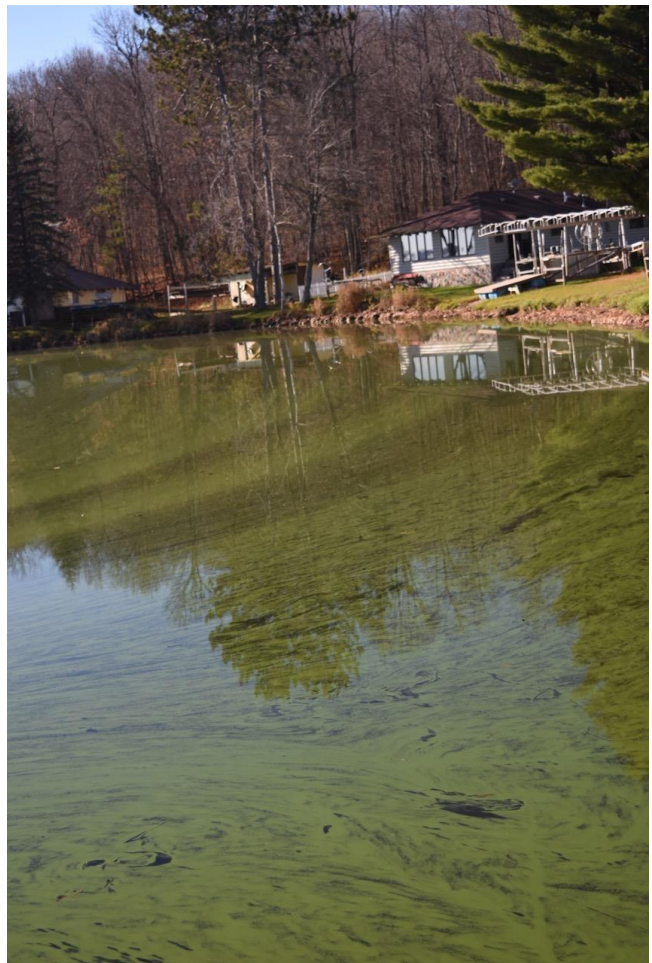
What to look for and how to report anything new or unusual

HAYWARD, Wisconsin (November 8, 2016) When a lake looks like pea soup, that's the effect of a blue-green algae bloom. A first-ever bloom of this kind developed on Stuckey Bay, Lac Courte Oreilles, on or about Sunday, November 6, 2016 and lasted for five days. Gary Pulford, COLA vice-president and Brett McConnell, environmental specialist for the LCO Conservation Department, took pictures and collected samples as directed by LimnoTech, an independent water environment research and engineering firm based in Ann Arbor, MI, that regularly assists federal and state agencies, including the Wisconsin DNR, to study lakes and streams across the country.

The phytoplankton samples were sent to LimnoTech's lab at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, for microcystin analysis and determination of any toxicity for humans or pets on the lake. Samples were also sent to Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) Duluth, MN, for identification of the individual algae species that made up this algal bloom.

What Causes Algae Blooms

"Algal blooms are caused by excessive nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) in the water, causing an explosion in algae production. Blooms are usually seen in mid to late summer when higher water temperatures help drive excess algae production. It is unusual to have algae blooms into November. This late bloom on Lac Courte Oreilles can likely be explained by the by the warm temperatures we are experiencing combined with an ever-lengthening growing season, the lake turning over and nutrient-rich water being forced to the surface, and the phosphorus-rich flood water being discharged from the cranberry bogs during harvest--all happening at the same time," said Pulford.



Blue-green algae bloom in Stuckey Bay.

Lab Results for Incident on Lac Courte Oreilles

According to Ed Verhamme, Project Engineer at LimnoTech, “I received confirmation from the lab that neither of the samples contained any traces of algal toxins above detection limits. That doesn’t mean toxins are not possible in the future. We’ve seen non-toxic blooms turn toxic (on Lake Erie) when faced with limited availability of nitrogen in the water. Ratios of nitrogen to phosphorus are key trends to track in the lake.”

Homeowner Information – Blue-Green Algae

Information on identifying blue-green algae and safety precautions [on identifying blue-green algae and safety precautions](#) for humans and pets was provided to COLA by Gina LaLiberte, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Management Specialist – Water Quality Monitoring Section. She also suggests that homeowners becoming familiar with the information about blue-green algae on the following websites:

Wisconsin DNR: <http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/bluegreenalgae>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/bg-algae/index.htm>

What to Look for and How to Report What You See

Every homeowner on Lac Courte Oreilles plays an important role in monitoring what is happening on the lake. Be on the lookout for any changes you see or anything you consider unusual. With both the recent cisco and whitefish die-off in October 2016 and this algae bloom, it was homeowners reporting what they saw that was key to immediate data collection and analysis. Even if you have a question about something you see, let the COLA board know. We are here and ready to help. [Use the new COLA Observation Forms](#). And, if you want to discuss your findings further, you can call COLA at colacommunications@gmail.com or call 612-839-8558.

Thank you! Together we will make sure we are all doing the best to look after and take care of Lac Courte Oreilles.

Learn more about COLA’s efforts to protect the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles—the fifth-largest natural lake in Wisconsin at 5,030 acres, an [Outstanding Resource Water](#), and a rare, two-story cold-water fishery. As part of this goal, COLA is committed to helping provide the science and lead the way in reducing pollution, to serve not only Lac Courte Oreilles and its watershed, but also other Wisconsin lakes and the organizations that support them. Visit www.cola-wi.org. For questions and interviews, contact Jim Coors at colacommunications@gmail.com or call 608-628-0694.



Brett McConnell of the LCO Conservation Department taking blue-green algae samples on Stuckey Bay.