

# Sports

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(F1C)

## Our not so great lakes!

### Oxygen loss prematurely chokes life

By Bill Parker  
staff writer

IMAGINE, for a moment, lakes without life. Life without lakes: no swimming, boating or fishing. No water skiing. No sailing. It's an eerie thought, but one that bears consideration.

Many lakes, especially in southeastern Michigan, are dying a premature death. The murderer is cultural eutrophication, a natural process being accelerated by man.

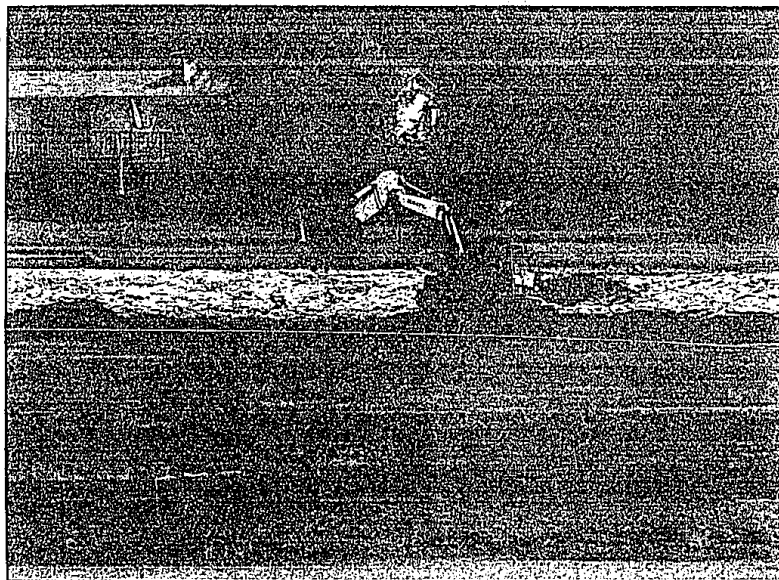
Eutrophication is the gradual increase of nutrients in a body of water depleting the oxygen. Without oxygen, the lake dies and turns into a mucky swamp. It's a process that happens eventually, to every lake. But it can take hundreds, even thousands of years for nature to run its course.

When plants die, the decay process takes oxygen from the water. The decaying plants also absorb sunlight, which warms the water and limits the water's ability to store oxygen. As the level of oxygen declines, fish begin to die and decay, taking even more oxygen from the water.

All this decaying matter adds nutrients to the water, on which plants and algae thrive, further accelerating the cycle. Meanwhile, the lake is slowly filling with muck and sediment.

From a recreational view, the lake is already dead. Swimmers stay away from the brown, sediment-filled water. Boaters and anglers give up hope as the weeds become too thick to allow normal usage.

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STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Earth-moving equipment is in the process of removing 15,000 cubic feet of muck from Troy's Lake Charnwood. Lake improvement boards across the state are keeping tabs on the project, the first large scale operation of its kind.

### Citizens restore Troy lake

By Bill Parker  
staff writer

Perched in the midst of an affluent Troy subdivision, Lake Charnwood was once a beautiful, 10-acre man-made lake, complete with a private community beach, a sandy/gravel bottom and plenty of room for swimming, fishing and boating.

But time and development took their toll.

Drainage from a huge watershed dumped everything from lawn fertilizers to top soil into the lake. A tributary of the Rouge River that enters one end of the lake (and exits the other) also deposited sediment along the bottom.

The lake was shallow from the start, averaging less than eight feet in depth. Slowly, but surely, it began to fill up with weeds and algae flourished — a natural sign of aging.

"There was so much (sediment) the kids didn't even want to swim in the lake anymore," said Joe Mikalla, vice president of the Lake Charnwood Home Owners' Association. "That (sediment) would get all over you. When you got out of the water it looked like you were wearing black nylons. And the weeds were really bad, too."

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## Troubled waters are calling for help

ONE OF MY favorite fishing lakes has almost disappeared. Actually, it's just too overgrown with weeds to even think about trying to catch any fish.

Captain Jon Moleky of Southfield took us charter fishing last week in Muskegon. We caught a couple dandy lake trout, but I'm a little worried about eating them since the National Wildlife Federation's recent report which apparently links a significant cancer risk with the consumption of Lake Michigan lake trout.

I've also got a freezer full of blue gill, perch and pike. But the Michigan Health Department says I'm not supposed to eat more than one meal of these fish a week or I could develop mercury poisoning. I shouldn't give any to my 3-year-old daughter. The department issued a statewide consumption advisory against eating too much of certain predator fish

from Michigan inland lakes. Now, I don't want to sound like Chicken Little, but let's face the fact. Our lakes are dying.

I WAS RAISED in northern Oakland County in an area which I could walk no more than 10 minutes in any direction and find a lake. As a kid, I loved to go fishing, swimming, boating and water skiing. That's probably why I'm so concerned with the state of Michigan lakes. I remember when license plates used to read "Water Winter Wonderland."

Locally, there's concern about eutrophication, the natural aging process of a lake. As weeds die, they begin to decay which lowers the oxygen levels of the water. With low oxygen levels, fish begin to die, too. Algae and weeds flourish with the added nutrients from the decaying matter. The cycle continues until the lake eventual-



Bill Parker outdoors

ly turns into a swamp then finally dries up. Naturally, this process could take thousands of years. But with man's assistance — development along the lake without concern for the water, municipal and industrial discharges into the lakes, phosphorus-based lawn fertilizers draining into the lakes, faulty septic fields — the process is increased at a rate as much as five times that of the natural rate.

ON A WIDER spectrum, lakes are becoming polluted to the ex-

tent that they are affecting our daily life.

Lake Michigan's multi-million dollar charter industry has been all but devastated by the NWF's cancer scare. Although the specific amount of carcinogens found in fish varies depending on whom you talk to, everyone involved agrees there is a problem. The real question is: Just how big is the problem?

The Michigan Department of Public Health issued an advisory last year limiting the amount of consumption of rock bass, perch and crappie over 9 inches, largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike and muskie caught in Michigan inland lakes. That's every single lake in Michigan. Results of a limited sampling of fish revealed that some fish did contain levels of mercury exceeding the state's level of public concern. Since it was not feasible to check all the inland lakes in

Michigan, the MDPH issued a statewide advisory.

Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota and parts of Canada are experiencing the same problems. Experts agree, the majority of the mercury entering our lakes is entering from the atmosphere in the form of acid rain.

OUR LAKES and the condition of the water in them, are deteriorating badly. Although some of our lakes were made by man, most are natural bodies of water. But the problems afflicting them are man-made. The only actions that will save our lakes must also be man-made. These problems won't correct themselves without our help. We must clean up our act and begin to appreciate our natural resources for what they are.

Developers must be aware of the impact a subdivision will

have on a body of water and do everything possible not to upset nature's balance. Lake residents must work to keep their lakes clean and free of chemicals and other pollutants.

Air pollution is entering our water and poisoning our fish. We must change our ways and clean our air.

I challenge our politicians to take a strong stand against pollution and insensitivity to our resources. Forget about all the bureaucratic baloney and the political red tape and get down to the issues that are troubling our waters.

Obviously, we can't eliminate these problems overnight. But if this generation doesn't make a serious effort to clean our lakes, our air, our environment, lake life as we know it — fishing, swimming, boating and skiing — may live only in the history books of our grandchildren.

## People stay away from polluted Newburg Lake

By Steve Kowalski  
staff writer

Ed Wisniewski, a 64-year-old resident of Wayne, says he likes to fish on Newburg Lake because "nobody bothers you there; they leave you alone."

Few boaters and no swimmers bide their time at Newburg, the only public lake in the Observerland coverage area. None of the lakes in Wayne County allows swimming.

Unlike Oakland County — where lakes are abundant and many are made available to swimmers — lakes in Wayne County tend to be occupied more by weeds and lily pads.

And an occasional fisherman. Blue gill, large-mouth bass and northern pike are some of the fish found in Newburg.

"FISH HANG out around weeds," said Wisniewski, who has fished the Newburg waters the last decade. "There's weeds all over the place. As long as people don't throw garbage in the water I'll be all right."

Although Wisniewski likes the serenity of Newburg Lake, he says he wouldn't mind seeing the water cleaned because it "would be so nice to bring the grandkids. I've got 12 of them."

The 104.7 acres of water hasn't been open to swimmers since the 1930s because of rising pollution, said Nancy Watkins, manager of design for the Wayne County Parks Division. Boats without motors are allowed on Newburg.

Watkins said there will never be swimming allowed in Newburg because of the "no-contact water," flowing into it from the Rouge River.

There are no plans to remove weeds either by chemicals or by manual harvest, Watkins said.

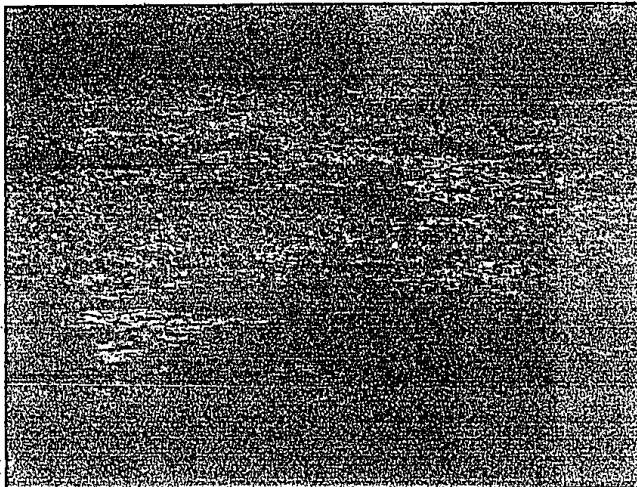
SHE ADDED that no one has ever requested that weeds be removed and that the lakes in Wayne County are "actually exaggerated wet lands. There's more wildlife and you're not going to get sand-based lakes in Wayne County like there are in Oakland County."

"Mother Nature didn't make lakes in Wayne County," Watkins said. "I don't think we have any weed trouble, that's just its natural form. That's the way it's supposed to be."

Weed growth is brought on by fertilizer runoff from the shores, said Maureen Hein, an aquatic biologist in the state of Michigan's Land and Water Management Division in Lansing. Since private property is limited around Newburg, Hein said weed development might also be caused by storm drains and organic soil, which is prevalent in the Lower Peninsula.

Watkins said a master plan study is being conducted by a landscaping firm in Kalamazoo to look into the possibility of cleaning the land surrounding the Wayne County lakes.

The study will determine whether better fishing locations, launching areas, handicapped ramps and parking could be added around the lake, Watkins said.



CHUCK HEINEY/staff photographer

Newburg Lake, the only public lake in Observerland, has turned into a sea of weeds and lily pads in recent years.