CRYSTAL LAKE
Water Quality Monitoring: 2003
Summary and Recommendations
NH LAKES LAY MONITORING PROGRAM

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To obtain additional information on the NH Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (NH LLMP) contact the Coordinator (Jeff Schloss) at 603-862-3848 or Assistant Coordinator (Bob Craycraft) at 603-862-3696.
PARAMETERS SAMPLED
NH LAKES LAY MONITORING PROGRAM

LAY MONITORS

BASIC PROGRAM
- Secchi Disk Depth
- Temperature Profile
- Chlorophyll a
- Dissolved Color
- Total Alkalinity
- Total Phosphorus

ADVANCED OPTIONS
- pH
- Metalimnetic Chlorophyll a
- Specific Conductivity
- Hypolimnetic Total Phosphorus
- Dissolved Oxygen
- Bacteria
- Fish Condition
- Rainfall & pH
- Aquatic Vegetation Surveys
- Motorboat Effects
- Watershed NPS Surveys
- Road Salt Runoff

STREAM MONITORING
- Observational Surveys
- Temperature
- Specific Conductivity
- Total Alkalinity
- Total Phosphorus
- Stream Flow
- Macro-Invertebrates
- Storm Event Sampling
- Bacteria

Center for Freshwater Biology (CFB) corroboration with the lay monitor data includes assessment of 1) physical parameters (water transparency, temperature profiles, light transmission profiles and water color); 2) chemical parameters (dissolved oxygen profiles, "free" carbon dioxide, total alkalinity, pH, total phosphorus and specific conductivity profiles); 3) biological parameters (chlorophyll a, phytoplankton community and zooplankton community). Note: in addition to the above parameters, other measurements are often collected at the discretion of the CFB or at the request of the lake association.
PREFACE

This report contains the findings of a water quality survey of Crystal Lake, Enfield New Hampshire, conducted in the summer of 2003 by the University of New Hampshire Center For Freshwater Biology (CFB) in conjunction with the Crystal Lake Association.

The report is written with the concerned lake resident in mind and contains a brief, non-technical summary of the year 2003 results as well as more detailed "Introduction" and "Discussion" sections. Graphic display of data is included, in addition to listings of data in appendices, to aid visual perspective.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The year 2003 was the fourteenth year Crystal Lake was monitored in conjunction with the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (LLMP). The volunteer monitor involved in the water quality monitoring effort is highlighted in Table 1 while Glyn Green also acted as liaison to the UNH Center for Freshwater Biology (CFB). The Center for Freshwater Biology congratulates Glyn on the quality of his work, and the time and effort put forth. We invite other interested residents to join the Crystal Lake water quality monitoring effort in 2004 and expand upon the current database. The Crystal Lake Association and the Town of Enfield provided the funding for the volunteer monitoring program while the CFB provided at-cost services.

The Center for Freshwater Biology is a not-for-profit research program coordinated by Jeffrey Schloss and Robert Craycraft. Members of the CFB summer field team included, Carl Chaimberlan, Robert Craycraft, Jonathan Gravel, Matt Hinderliter and Josh Lamson while Caitlin Milone and Kara Houghton provided additional assistance compiling and organizing the water quality data in the fall.

The CFB acknowledges the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension for funding and furnishing office and storage space while the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture provided laboratory facilities and additional storage space. A generous gift from the Samuel P. Pardoe Foundation allowed for an update of our volunteer temperature profiling equipment and the US Geological Survey, through the UNH Water Resources Research Center, provided some resources for staff support.

CRYSral LAKE
2003 Non-Technical Summary

Water quality data were collected in Crystal Lake between June 8 and August 31, 2003. Generally speaking, the 2003 Crystal Lake water quality data are characteristic of an unproductive "pristine" New Hampshire lake as summarized in Table 2. The 2003 seasonal average water transparency was high and measured 18.5 feet (5.6 meters) while the amount of microscopic plant growth and the total phosphorus (nutrient) concentrations were low and remained well below nuisance levels.

The following section discusses the year 2003 and historical Crystal Lake water quality data while Appendix A provides a complete listing of the year 2003 Crystal Lake water quality data.

Table 2: 2003 Crystal Lake Seasonal Average Water Quality Readings and Water Quality Classification Criteria used by the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Oligotrophic &quot;Pristine&quot;</th>
<th>Mesotrophic &quot;Transitional&quot;</th>
<th>Eutrophic &quot;Enriched&quot;</th>
<th>Crystal Lake Seasonal Average (range)</th>
<th>Crystal Lake Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Clarity (meters)</td>
<td>&gt; 4.0</td>
<td>2.5 - 4.0</td>
<td>&lt; 2.5</td>
<td>5.6 meters (range: 5.0 - 6.5)</td>
<td>Oligotrophic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorophyll a (ppb)</td>
<td>&lt; 3.0</td>
<td>3.0 - 7.0</td>
<td>&gt; 7.0</td>
<td>1.7 ppb (range: 1.0 - 2.3)</td>
<td>Oligotrophic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Phosphorus (ppb)</td>
<td>&lt; 15.0</td>
<td>15.0 - 25.0</td>
<td>&gt; 25.0</td>
<td>6.3 ppb (range: 3.9 - 13.0)</td>
<td>Oligotrophic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Water Clarity (measured as Secchi Disk transparency) – The 2003 seasonal average water transparency average of 18.5 feet (5.6 meters) is characteristic of an unproductive New Hampshire Lake. All of the 2003 Crystal Lake Secchi Disk measurements remained above the water transparency of 4.0 meters which is considered the boundary between an unproductive and a moderately productive New Hampshire lake (Figures 12 and 13).

The 2003 seasonal average Secchi Disk transparency measured 18.5 feet (5.6 meters) for the second consecutive year. The 2003 Secchi Disk transparency measurements remained well within the range of historical water transparency readings that have been collected since volunteer water quality monitoring was initiated on Crystal Lake in 1989 (Figure 14).

2) Microscopic plant abundance "greenness" (measured as chlorophyll a) – The 2003 seasonal average Crystal Lake chlorophyll a concentration of 1.7 parts per billion (ppb) remained well below the concentration of 3.0 ppb considered the boundary between an unproductive and moderately productive New Hampshire lake. The 2003 chlorophyll a concentrations remained below nuisance levels and corresponded to the relatively high water transparencies that were documented during the 2003 sampling season.
The 2003 seasonal average Crystal Lake chlorophyll a concentration measured 1.7 ppb for the second consecutive year and the chlorophyll a measurements remained well within the range of historical values documented since 1989 (Figure 15).

3) Background (dissolved) water color: often perceived as a “tea” color in our more highly stained lakes – The 2003 seasonal average Crystal Lake dissolved color concentration of 24.1 chlorophlatinate units (cpu) falls within the classification of a lightly "tea" colored lake (Table 3). Dissolved color, or true color as it is sometimes called, is indicative of dissolved organic carbon levels in the water (a by-product of microbial decomposition). Small increases in water color from the natural breakdown of plant materials in and around a lake are not considered detrimental to water quality. However, increased color can lower water transparency, and hence, change the public perception of water quality. The 2003 Crystal Lake dissolved color concentrations increased, relative to the 2002 concentrations, and reflect the increase in spring runoff, as well as, the heavy rainfall that characterized the month of August (Figure 13).

4) Total Phosphorus: the nutrient considered most responsible for elevated microscopic plant growth in our New Hampshire Lakes. - The 2003 Crystal Lake total phosphorus concentrations were low and ranged from 3.9 to 13.0 parts per billion (ppb). With the exception of a July 6 total phosphorus concentration of 13.0 ppb, documented at site 3 Bicknel Brook, the 2003 total phosphorus concentrations remained below the total phosphorus concentration of 15 ppb which is considered the boundary between an unproductive and moderately nutrient enriched "transitional" New Hampshire lake (Table 2). The 2003 seasonal average total phosphorus concentration was lowest at the centrally located deep sampling station, Site 1 Deep, and was highest at the primary tributary inlet, Site 3 Bicknel Brook (Table 4). The variation in total phosphorus concentrations among the three sampling stations is not uncommon among New Hampshire Lakes. In fact, the deep open water sampling stations, such as Site 1 Deep, are commonly characterized by the least amount of nutrients while the nearshore and tributary sampling sites exhibit elevated total phosphorus concentrations that are associated with the flushing of nutrient into our lakes from the uplands (watershed).

| Table 3. Dissolved Color Classification Criteria used by the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program. |
|---|---|
| Range | Classification |
| 0 - 10 | Clear |
| 10 - 20 | Slightly colored |
| 20 - 40 | Light tea color |
| 40 - 80 | Tea colored |
| > 80 | Highly tea colored |

| Table 4. Total Phosphorus inter-site comparison (2003 seasonal average data) |
|---|---|
| Site | Total Phosphorus (ppb) |
| 1 Deep | 4.5 ppb (range: 3.9 - 4.2 ppb) |
| Outlet | 6.0 ppb (range: 4.2 - 7.5 ppb) |
| 3 Bicknel Brk. | 8.5 ppb (range: 4.8 - 13.0 ppb) |
5) Resistance against acid precipitation (measured as total alkalinity) – The 2003 Crystal Lake alkalinity measured 6.6 milligrams per liter (mg/l) and is considered typical of a lake that is moderately vulnerable to acid precipitation based on the standards devised by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (Table 4). Generally speaking, the geology of the region does not contain the appropriate mineral content (e.g. limestone) to increases the buffering capacity of our surface waters. Thus, lakes in the region (e.g. Goose Pond) have naturally low alkalinitities. While low, the Crystal Lake alkalinity remained sufficient to buffer against acid inputs and to avoid wide acidity (pH) fluctuations.

Lake acidity (measured as pH) - The most recent Crystal Lake pH data, collected by the Center for Freshwater Biology on July 15 and August 5, 2001, measured 7.3 units in the surface waters and remained well within the tolerable range for most aquatic organisms.

6) Dissolved salts: measured as specific conductivity – The most recent Crystal Lake specific conductivity levels, measured by the Center for Freshwater Biology on July 15 and August 5, 2001, were moderate and ranged from 48 to 53 micro-Siemans (µS). High specific conductivity values can be an indication of problem areas around a lake where failing septic systems, heavy fertilizer applications and shoreland erosion contribute “excessive” nutrients that make their way into the lake. High specific conductivity measurements can also be an indication of heavy road salt application within the watershed.

7) Temperature and dissolved oxygen profiles – Temperature profiles collected by the volunteer monitors indicate Crystal Lake becomes stratified into three distinct thermal layers during the summer months. A warm upper water layer, the epilimnion, overlies a deep cold-water layer, the hypolimnion, and a third layer of rapidly decreasing temperatures, the metalimnion, separates the surface and deep water layers. The formation of thermal stratification limits the replenishment of oxygen in the deeper waters and under adverse conditions can lead to oxygen depletion near the lake-bottom.

Dissolved oxygen concentrations required for a healthy fishery – The most recent dissolved oxygen concentrations, documented by the Center for Freshwater Biology on July 15 and August 5, 2001, remained above 5 milligrams per liter down to about 13 meters. The dissolved oxygen concentration of 5 milligrams per liter is commonly considered the minimum dissolved oxygen concentration required for the successful growth and reproduction of coldwater fish that include lake trout and salmon. While the 2001 Crystal Lake dissolved oxygen concentrations remained above 5 mg/L, historical water quality monitoring indicates the dissolved oxygen concentrations become reduced in the deeper wa-
ters (thermocline and hypolimnion) and are sub-optimal for the successful growth and reproduction of coldwater fish species.

8) Based on the current and historical water quality data, Crystal Lake would be considered a clear and relatively unproductive “pristine” New Hampshire lake that has historically exhibited some characteristics (i.e. short term algal blooms and low oxygen near the lake bottom) considered typical of a moderately nutrient enriched “transitional” lake. A first step towards minimizing water quality deterioration in Crystal Lake is to take action at the local level and do your part to minimize the number of pollutants (particularly sediment and the nutrient phosphorus) that enter the lake. Whenever possible, maintain riparian buffers (vegetative buffers adjacent to the water body). These buffers will biologically “take up” nutrients before they enter the lake and will also provide physical filters which allow materials to settle out before reaching the lake. Reduce fertilizer applications. Most residents apply far more fertilizers than necessary which can be a costly expense to the homeowner and can also be detrimental to the lake since the same nutrients that make our lawns green will also stimulate plant growth in our lakes. Make sure your septic system is well maintained and have it pumped out on a regular basis. An improperly functioning septic system can contribute “excessive” nutrients into the lake and result in early failure, costing thousands of dollars to repair or replace. Future volunteer monitoring efforts should be directed at pinpointing problematic regions around the lake where corrective and educational efforts should be focused. It is important to make sure the watershed residents are well-educated on water quality related issues. Numerous publications are available through University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, the New Hampshire Lakes Association, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services as well as several other local, state and federal agencies.

It is imperative that future activities within the Crystal Lake watershed are carefully thought out before implementation if water quality degradation is to be minimized. Refer to the “Understanding Lake Aging” section for a list of publications pertinent to watershed protection.
COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1) We recommend that each participating lake association, including the Crystal Lake Association, continue to develop its database on lake water quality through continuation of the long-term monitoring program. The database currently provides information on the short-term and long-term cyclic variability that occurs in Crystal Lake. Continued monitoring would enable more reliable predictions of both short-term and long-term water quality trends.

2) We recommend initiating lake sampling early in the season (April/May) to document Crystal Lake’s reaction to the nutrient and acid loadings that typically occur during and after spring thaw. Sampling should include alkalinity, chlorophyll a, dissolved color, Secchi Disk transparency and total phosphorus measurements.

3) Frequent “weekly” water quality samples, necessary to assess the current condition of Crystal Lake, should continue to be collected whenever possible. Continued sampling of chlorophyll a, Secchi Disk transparency, dissolved color, alkalinity and total phosphorus samples will be useful to track variations in nutrient loading during the summer months.

4) We recommend the continued collection of in-lake and tributary phosphorus samples during and following periods of heavy rainfall to better assess the nutrient load, and to locate potential problem areas, within the Crystal Lake watershed. Increased erosion and increased nutrient loading are naturally associated with storm events. However, when poor land management practices are performed (i.e. excessive fertilizer applications, extensive vegetation removal) we often observed “excessive” nutrient and sediment levels in our streams. Baseline stream data (collected between 2001 and 2003) indicate the larger Crystal Lake tributaries contained relatively low phosphorus concentrations during the period of low streamflow. Further sampling of these tributaries during and following heavy storm events (when sediments and nutrients are washed into the streams) will better assess whether or not local water quality problems exist.

5) Some lakes have expanded their monitoring programs to include supplemental near-shore sampling locations that would help screen for problem areas and, when problems are identified, resources (i.e. money and volunteer hours) could be targeted to the most critical areas within the watershed where future monitoring and corrective efforts should be directed. Expanded water quality monitoring could be as simple as collecting additional near-shore/tributary total phosphorus or chlorophyll a samples or could involve the expansion to the collec-
tion of additional water quality parameters such as dissolved oxygen and specific conductivity measurements. Advanced water quality monitoring efforts might also include more in-depth shoreline/watershed surveys aimed at visually identifying the land-use patterns and potential problem areas within the drainage basin. If you are interested in discussing additional water quality monitoring options that would meet your needs please contact Bob Craycraft @ 862-3696 or via email, bob.craycraft@unh.edu.
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INTRODUCTION

The New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program

The 2003 sampling season marked the twenty-fifth anniversary for the NH Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (LLMP). The LLMP has grown from a university class project on Chocorua Lake and pilot study on the Squam Lakes to a comprehensive state-wide program with over 500 volunteer monitors and more than 100 lakes participating. Originally developed to establish a database for determining long-term trends of lake water quality for science and management, the program has expanded by taking advantage of the many resources that citizen monitors can provide (Figure 1).

The NH LLMP has gained an international reputation as a successful cooperative monitoring, education and research program. Current projects include: the use of volunteer generated data for non-point pollution studies using high tech analysis system (Geographic Information Systems and Satellite Remote Sensing), and intensive watershed monitoring for the development of watershed nutrient budgets, investigations of water quality and indicator organisms (food web analysis, fish condition, and stream invertebrates). The key ingredients responsible for the success of the program include innovative cost share funding and cost reduction, assurance of credible data, practical sampling protocols and, most importantly, the interest and motivation of our volunteer monitors.

The 2003 sampling season was another exciting year for the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program. National recognition for the high quality

Figure 1. LLMP Objectives

LLMP Objectives:
Baseline Lake Water Quality Information for Change and Trends
Lake Volunteer Monitoring Training
Shoreline & Watershed Surveys
Survey for Non-Native Species
Tie-In with Youth & Adult Education

Figure 2. Awards & Recognition

1983 - NH Environmental Law Council Award
1984 - Governor's Volunteerism Award
1985 - CNN Science & Technology Today
1988 - Governor's "Gift" request funded
1990 - New Hampshire Journal TV Spot
1991 - Renew America Success Award
Environmental Success Index
White House Environment Briefing
1992 - EPA Administrators Award
Environmental Exchange Network Listing
1993 - NH Lakes Association Award
1994 - Fourth National Citizens' Volunteer Monitoring Conference
EPA Office of Watersheds Award
1995 - Co-editors Volunteer Monitor Newsletter (Spring Issue)
Winnipesaukee Watershed Project
1996 - Fifth National Citizens' Volunteer Monitoring Conference
1998 - Governor's Proclamation for Anniversary
Our New England Lakes Conference Host
1999 - EPA Watershed Academy Guest
2000 - Sixth National Citizen's Monitoring Conference
2001 - Lake Chocorua Project Highlighted at National Lakes
Conference and National Water Monitoring Conference
2002 - Lake Chocorua Project Received North American Lake
Management Technical Achievement Award
2003 - Presentations at national conferences in Connecticut and Colorado
Included volunteer generated water quality data
of work by you, the volunteer monitors, continued with awards, requests for program information and invitations to speak at national conferences (Figure 2).

Watersheds and water resources continue to be important topics covered in our spring semester Multidisciplinary Lakes Management course and our summer Community Mapping with GIS and Watershed Ecology courses that are held annually. These courses for educators, community leaders and other interested persons teach participants how to use the desktop Geographic Information System software - a computer based technology that allows users to create, map, manage, analyze and manipulate data and related locational information.

Research initiated by the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program and collaborators Dr. John Sasner and Dr. Jim Haney of the UNH Center for Freshwater Biology continued to focus on how watershed development and our activities on the landscape play a role in creating potentially toxic algae blooms. Analogous to the “red tide” of estuaries, certain blue-green algae (microscopic bacteria) can produce toxins that are heath risks to animals and humans.

Ongoing research is focusing on the use of satellite imagery as a means of determining the water transparency and amount of microscopic plant “algal” growth in our New Hampshire Lakes. Water quality data, collected by the volunteer monitors, has served as ground truthed data to assess whether or not the satellite imagery shows promise and early analysis suggests this technique shows promise. Data generated through this project have been presented at national conferences and are testament to the high quality data generated by our volunteer monitors.

A volunteer facilitated water quality improvement study continues to indicate a significant reduction in the phosphorus loadings due to berms, swales and diversions that are installed adjacent to Chocorua Lake to mitigate water quality problems. This project continues to receive national recognition due to the cooperation among numerous agencies that include the NH Department of Transportation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, North Country Resource and Development, the Carroll County Conservation District and the NH Department of Environmental Services. The new phase of this project includes further documentation of these best management practices to deal with road drainages as well as a new investigation that is determining the water quality protection provided by the wetland areas in the watershed.

We continue to be listed as a model citizen-monitoring program on the Environmental Success Index of Renew America, the Environmental Network Clearinghouse and the National Awards Council for Environmental Sustainability. To date, the ap-
proach and methods of the NH LLMP have been adopted by new or existing programs in twenty-four states and eleven countries (Figure 3)!

**Importance of Long-term Monitoring**

A major goal of our monitoring program is to identify any short or long-term changes in the water quality of the lake. Of major concern is the detection of cultural eutrophication: increases in the productivity of the lake, the amount of algae and plant growth, due to the addition of nutrients from human activities. Changes in the natural buffering capacity of the lakes in the program is also a topic of great concern, as New Hampshire receives large amounts of acid precipitation, yet most of our lakes contain little mineral content to neutralize this type of pollution.

For over two decades, weekly data collected from lakes participating in the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program have indicated there is quite a variation in water quality indicators through the open water season (April through November) on the majority of lakes. Short-term differences may be due to variations in weather, lake use, or other chance events. Monthly sampling of a lake during a single summer provides some useful information, but there is a greater chance that important short-term events such as algal blooms or the lake’s response to storm runoff will be missed. These short-term fluctuations may be unrelated to the actual long-term trend of a lake or they may be indicative of the changing status or "health" of a lake.

Consider the hypothetical data depicted in Figure 4. Sampling only once a year during August, from 1988 to 1992, produced a plot suggesting a decrease in eutrophication. However, the actual long-term trend of the lake, increasing eutrophy, can only be clearly discerned by frequent sampling over a ten year period (Figure 5). In this instance, the information necessary to distinguish between short-term fluctuations “noise” and long-term trends “signal” could only be accomplished through the frequent collection of water quality data over many years. To that end, the establishment of a long term database was essential to trend detection.
The number of seasons it takes to distinguish between the noise and the signal is not the same for each lake. Evaluation and interpretation of a long-term database will indicate that the water quality of the lake has worsened, improved, or remained the same. In addition, different areas of a lake may show a different response. As more data are collected, prediction of current and future trends can be made. No matter what the outcome, this information is essential for the intelligent management of your lake.

There are also short-term uses for lay monitoring data. The examination of different stations in a lake can disclose the location of specific problems and corrective action can be initiated to handle the situation before it becomes more serious. On a lighter note, some associations post their weekly data for use in determining the best depths for finding fish!

It takes a considerable amount of effort as well as a deep concern for one's lake to be a volunteer in the NH Lakes Lay Monitoring Program. Many times a monitor has to brave inclement weather or heavy boat traffic to collect samples. Sometimes it even may seem that one week's data is just the same as the next week's data. Yet every sampling provides important information on the variability of the lake.

We are pleased with the interest and commitment of our Lay Monitors and are proud that their work is what makes the NH LLMP the most extensive, and we believe, the best volunteer program of its kind.

**Purpose and Scope of This Effort**

The year 2003 was the fourteenth year that water quality monitoring of Crystal Lake was undertaken in conjunction with the NH Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (NH LLMP). The monitoring program is designed to establish a long-term database to which future data can be compared and to identify localized problem areas where future educational and corrective efforts should be focused. Sampling emphasis was placed on one deep, open water, sampling station while supplemental tributary sampling was also undertaken during the months of June, July and August.

The primary purpose of annual lake reporting is to discuss results of the current monitoring season with emphasis on current conditions of New Hampshire lakes including the extent of eutrophication and the lakes' susceptibility to increasing acid precipitation. This information is part of a large data base of historical and more recent data.
compiled and entered onto computer files for New Hampshire lakes that include New Hampshire Fish and Game surveys of the 1930's, the surveys conducted by the New Hampshire Water Supply and Pollution Control Commission and the CFB/FBG surveys. However, care must be taken when comparing current results with early studies. Many complications arise due to methodological differences of the various analytical facilities and technological improvements in testing.
Water Quality and the Weather

Since the inception of the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (NH LLMP), questions have been asked pertaining to water quality changes that occur in our New Hampshire lakes and ponds. The most commonly noticed changes are those associated with decreasing water clarities, increasing algal growth (greenness), and increasing plant growth around the lake’s periphery. Over the long haul, changes such as these are attributed to a lake’s natural aging process; what is known as “eutrophication”. However, short-term water quality changes such as those mentioned above are often encountered even in our most pristine lakes and ponds. These water quality changes often coincide with variations in weather variables such as precipitation and temperature.

Climatic “swings” can have a profound effect on water quality, sometimes positive and other times negative. For instance, 1996 was a wet year relative to other years of LLMP water quality monitoring. This translated into reduced water clarities, elevated microscopic plant “algal” growth and increased total phosphorus concentrations for most participating LLMP lakes. “Excessive” runoff associated with wet periods often facilitates the transport of pollutants such as nutrients (including phosphorus), sediment, dissolved colored compounds, as well as toxic materials such as herbicides, automotive oils, etc. into water bodies. As a result, lakes often respond with shallower (less clear) water clarities and elevated algal abundance “greeness” during these periods as evidence by historical monitoring through the NH LLMP. Similarly, short-term storm events can have a profound effect on the water quality. Take for instance the “100 year storm” (October 21-22, 1996) that blanketed southern New Hampshire with approximately 6 inches of rain over a 30-hour period. This storm resulted in increased sedimentation and organic matter loading into our lakes as materials were flushed into the water bodies from the adjacent landscape. Likewise, the heavy rains that saturated the soil and resulted in flood conditions in June 1998 (heaviest rains occurring on June 12 and 13) resulted in significantly shallower water transparency readings in the weeks to months that followed. While events such as the October 1996 and the June 1998 storms are short lived, they can have a profound effect on our water quality in the weeks to months that follow, particularly when nutrients that stimulate plant growth are retained in the lake.

NH LLMP data collected during dry years such as 1985 and 2001, on the other hand, coincide with improved water quality for many New Hampshire lakes. Reduced transport of pollutants into the lake often results in higher water quality measured as deeper water transparencies, lower microscopic plant “algae” concentrations and lower nutrient concentrations. Do all lakes experience poorer water quality as a result of heavy precipitation events? Simply stated, the answer is no. While most New Hampshire lakes are characterized by reduced water clarities, increased nutrients and elevated plant “algal” concentrations following periods, or years, of heavy precipitation, a handful of lakes actually benefit from these types of events. These are generally lakes characterized by high nutrient concentrations and high “algal” concentrations that are diluted by watershed runoff and thus benefit during periods, or years, of heavy rainfall.
However, these more nutrient enriched lakes might be susceptible to nutrients entering the lake from seepage sources such as poorly functioning septic systems.

Precipitation (2002 and 2003)

The total 2002 precipitation (reported as water equivalent) measured 37.88 inches and was approximately three and one-half inches below the long-term precipitation average of 41.21 inches that has been documented over the past 25 years: 1979-2003. Monthly rainfall was slightly above average between March and June, 2002 while the rainfall was significantly below normal levels during the months of July and August. Atypically dry conditions during 2001 (total rainfall measured only 32.82 inches) coincided with a low groundwater table and coupled with the minimal July and August 2002 rainfall, translated into drought-like conditions from the summer into the fall months of 2002 (Figure 6).

The 2003 Monthly rainfall between June and April 2003 was slightly below average and continued the trend of relatively dry conditions while May was wetter than normal while June and July were atypically dry (Figure 7). The trend of near and below average precipitation limited overland runoff through the month of July. However, the precipitation shifted abruptly to atypically wet conditions during the month of August. August included several drenching storm events and a total of 7.43 inches of rainfall, compared to the twenty five year average of 3.65 inches for the month of August. Above average rainfall also characterized the months of September, October and December while the November rainfall was below average.

Snowfall also had an impact on the minimal overland runoff during the 2003 sampling season. The 2003 snowfall during the months of January, February and April were above the 22-year average, 1982-2003, while the March snowfall was significantly below the 22-year average (Figure 8). Significant accumulations of winter snowpack can result in a period of heavy overland runoff in the spring that oftentimes coincides with

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**Figure 6: Lakeport 2 Climatological Sampling Station (Laconia, NH)**

*Monthly Precipitation (1979-2003)*

![Graph showing monthly precipitation from 1979 to 2003, with notable deviations in 2002 and 1979-2003 compared to the 1979-2003 average.](image-url)
significant sediment and nutrient loading that negatively impacts water quality. The accumulated 2003 winter snowpack did result in a period of moderate to heavy spring discharge during the months of April and May. However, due to the dry conditions during the preceding year, the spring runoff period was naturally mitigated, to a degree, since much of the runoff occurred as groundwater recharge.
Temperature (2003)

Similar to the impact of precipitation extremes, temperature extremes can have far reaching effects on the water quality, particularly early in the year and during the summer months. Atypically warm spells can account for a rapid snowpack melt resulting in flooding and a massive influx of materials (e.g. nutrients, sediments) into our lakes during the late winter and early spring months. Early spring runoff periods coincide with minimal vegetative cover (that acts as a pollutant filter and soil stabilizer) and thus leaves the landscape highly susceptible to erosion. As we progress into the summer months, atypically warm periods can enhance both microscopic “algal” and macroscopic aquatic “weed” plant growth. During the summer growing season, above average temperatures often result in algal blooms that can reach nuisance proportions under optimal conditions. These can include surface algal “scums” that cover the lake and wash up on the windward lakeshores.

During years such as 1994 and 1995, when above average temperatures characterized the summer months, participating NH LLMP lakes were generally characterized by increased algal concentrations, particularly in the shallows, where filamentous cotton candy like clouds of algae (i.e. Mougeotia) flourished. Other NH LLMP lakes had increased algal growth “greenness” and shallower water transparencies during these “hot” periods.

The 2003 average monthly temperatures between the months of January and May were below the twenty-year average: 1984-2003 (Figure 9). The below average temperatures coincided with more winter/early spring snowfall than normal and resulted in the accumulation of winter snowpack. The below average winter and early spring temperatures also translated into a later than normal ice-out for our New Hampshire lakes relative to most years. The 2003 average monthly temperatures documented during the months of January (14.5°F) and February (18.9°F) were significantly below
average (6.1°F and 4.4°F below normal, respectively) while the 2003 average monthly temperatures during the months of March (30.0°F) and April (40.9°F) were also below average. The cool spring temperatures and the accumulation of winter snowpack was associated with a relatively heavy period of spring runoff. However, the dry conditions that characterized 2002 and returned during the months of June and July minimized the duration of the spring runoff period as much of the runoff rapidly re-saturated the soils in March, April and May and entered our surface waters as groundwater recharge. Subsequently, the abrupt shift to atypically dry conditions during the month of June coincided with minimal overland runoff.

**Water Quality Impacts**

**Water Transparency and Dissolved “tea” Colored Water**

As previously mentioned, shallower water transparency readings are characteristic of most New Hampshire lakes during wet years and following short term precipitation events. Wet periods often coincide with greater concentrations of dissolved “tea” colored compounds (dissolved organic matter resulting from the breakdown of vegetation and soils) washed in from surrounding forests and wetlands. Dissolved water color is not indicative of water quality problems (although large increases in dissolved color sometimes follow large land clearing operations) but in some of our more pristine program lakes, it nevertheless has a large effect on water clarity changes. Data collected by the Center for Freshwater Biology (CFB) since 1985 indicate most lakes are characterized by higher dissolved “tea” colored water during wet years relative to years more typical in terms of annual precipitation levels. In some of our more highly “tea” colored lakes the early spring months are also characterized by higher dissolved color concentrations, relative to mid-summer levels, due to the heavy runoff periods that flush highly colored water into our lakes during the period of spring snowmelt and following heavy spring rains.

**Sediment Loading**

Sediments are continuously flushed into our lakes and ponds during periods of heavy watershed runoff, particularly during snowmelt and again during and following sporadic storm events during the summer and fall months. Many New Hampshire lakes experience water clarity decreases following storm events such as those described above. Lakes, ponds and rivers are particularly susceptible to sediment loadings in the early spring months when vegetated shorelines wash, often referred to as riparian buffers, are reduced. With limited vegetation to trap sediments and suspended materials, a high percentage of the particulate debris and dissolved materials are flushed into the lake. Human activities such as logging, agriculture, construction and land clearing can also increase sediment displacement during and following heavy storm events throughout the year. These activities are often associated with excessive sediment loading in many of our lakes and ponds. As these materials (sediments) are transported into surface waters they can degrade water quality in a number of ways. When fine sediments (silt) enter a lake they tend to remain in the water column for relatively long periods of time. These suspended sediments can be abrasive to fish gills, ultimately leading to fish kills. Suspended sediments also reduce the available light necessary for plant growth that can result in plant die-offs and the subsequent oxygen depletion under extreme conditions.
As sediments settle out of the water column they can smother bottom dwelling aquatic organisms and fish spawning habitat. As the dead materials begin to decay the result can be noxious odors as well as stimulation of nuisance plant growth (i.e. scums along the lakebottom; new macroscopic plant growth). Note: one should keep in mind that nuisance plants such as water milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*) will generally regenerate more rapidly than more favorable plant forms. This can result in more problematic weed beds than those present before the disturbance. Habitat changes associated with the accumulation of fine sediments and associated “muck” might also favor increased nuisance plant growth in the future. Another unfavorable attribute of sediment loading is that the sediments tend to carry with them other sorts of contaminant such as pathogens, nutrients and toxic chemicals (i.e. herbicides and pesticides).

Early symptoms of excessive sediment runoff include deposits of fine material along the lakebottom, particularly in close proximity to tributary inlets and disturbed regions previously discussed (i.e. construction sites, logging sites, etc.). Silt may be visible covering rocks or aquatic vegetation along the lakebottom. During periods of heavy overland runoff the water might appear brown and turbid which reflects the sediment load. As material collects along the lakebottom you might notice a change in the weed composition reflecting a change in the substrate type (note: aquatic plants will display natural changes in abundance and distribution, so be careful not to jump to hasty conclusions). If excessive sediment loading is suspected, take a closer look in these areas and assess whether or not the change is associated with sediment loading (look for the warning signs discussed above) or whether the changes might be attributable to other factors.

**Nutrient Loading**

Nutrient loading is often greatest during heavy precipitation events, particularly during the periods of heavy watershed runoff. Phosphorus is generally considered the limiting nutrient for excessive plant and algal growth in New Hampshire lakes. Elevated phosphorus concentrations are generally most visible when documented in our tributary inlets where nutrients are concentrated in a relatively small volume of water. Much of the phosphorus entering our lakes is attached to particulate matter (i.e. sediments, vegetative debris), but may also include dissolved phosphorus associated with fertilizer applications and septic system discharge.

**Microscopic “Algal” and Macroscopic “Weed” Plant Growth**

**Historical Lakes Lay Monitoring Program** data indicate most lakes experience "algal blooms" during years with above average summer temperatures (June, July and August) while years with heavy precipitation are also associated with an increased frequency and occurrence of "algal blooms" among participating LLMP lakes. Algal blooms are often green water events associated with decreases in water clarity due to their ability to absorb and scatter light within the water column, but can also accumulate near the lake bottom in shallow areas as "mats" or on the water surface as "scums" and "clouds". During some years, such as 1996, the algal blooms are predominantly green water events composed of algae distributed within the water column. New Hampshire lakes were particularly susceptible to algal blooms in 1996 as a function of the heavy runoff associated with an atypically wet year. Wet years such as 1996 can be particularly hard on lakes where excessive fertilizer applications, agricultural practices and construction activities favor the displacement of nutrients into surface waters. The occasional formation of certain algal blooms is a naturally occurring phenomenon and is
not necessarily associated with changes in lake productivity. However, increases in the occurrence of bloom conditions can be a sign of eutrophication (the "greening" of a lake). Shifts from benign (clean water) forms to nuisance (polluted water) cyanobacterial forms such as *Anabaena*, *Aphanizomenon* and *Oscillatoria*, can also be a warning sign that improper land use practices are contributing excessive nutrients into the lake.

Filamentous cotton-candy like "clouds" of the nuisance green algae, *Mougeotia* and related species, have been well documented in 1994 and 1995 when the temperatures during the months of June and July were well above normal. These algal "clouds" often develop within nearshore weed beds where they can be seen along the lakebottom and tend to flourish during warm periods. During cooler years, this type of algal growth is kept "in check" and generally does not reach nuisance proportions.

In other lakes, metalimnetic algae, algae which tend to grow in a thin layer along the thermocline gradient in a lake's middle depths, sometimes migrate up towards the lake surface causing a "bloom" event. If these algae are predominantly "nuisance" forms, like certain green or blue-green algae, they can be an early indication of nutrient loading.
DISCUSSION OF LAKE AND STREAM MONITORING MEASUREMENTS

The section below details the important concepts involved for the various testing procedures used in the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program. Certain tests or sampling performed at the time of the optional Center for Freshwater Biology field trip are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Thermal Stratification in the Deep Water Sites

Lakes in New Hampshire display distinct patterns of temperature stratification, that develop as the summer months progress, where a layer of warmer water (the epilimnion) overlies a deeper layer of cold water (hypolimnion). The layer that separates the two regions characterized by a sharp drop in temperature with depth is called the thermocline or metalimnion (Figure 10). Some shallow lakes may be continually mixed by wind action and will never stratify. Other lakes may only contain a developed epilimnion and metalimnion.

Water Transparency

Secchi Disk depth is a measure of the water transparency. The deeper the depth of Secchi Disk disappearance, the more transparent the lake water; light penetrates deeper if there is little dissolved and/or particulate matter (which includes both living and non-living particles) to absorb and scatter it.

In the shallow areas of many lakes, the Secchi Disk will hit bottom before it is able to disappear from view (what is referred to as a "Bottom Out" condition). Thus, Secchi Disk measurements are generally taken over the deepest sites of a lake. Transparency values greater than 4 meters are typical of clear, unproductive lakes while transparency values less than 2.5 meters are generally an indication of highly productive lakes. Water transparency values between 2.5 meters and 4 meters are generally considered indicative of moderately productive lakes.
Chlorophyll $\alpha$

The chlorophyll $\alpha$ concentration is a measurement of the standing crop of phytoplankton and is often used to classify lakes into categories of productivity called trophic states. *Eutrophic* lakes are highly productive with large concentrations of algae and aquatic plants due to nutrient enrichment. Characteristics include accumulated organic matter in the lake basin and lower dissolved oxygen in the bottom waters. Summer chlorophyll $\alpha$ concentrations average above 7 mg m$^{-3}$ (7 milligrams per cubic meter; 7 parts per billion). *Oligotrophic* lakes have low productivity and low nutrient levels and average summer chlorophyll $\alpha$ concentrations that are generally less than 3 mg m$^{-3}$. These lakes generally have cleaner bottoms and high dissolved oxygen levels throughout. *Mesotrophic* lakes are intermediate in productivity with concentrations of chlorophyll $\alpha$ generally between 3 mg m$^{-3}$ and 7 mg m$^{-3}$. Testing is sometimes done to check for *metalimnetic algal populations*, algae that layer out at the thermocline and generally go undetected if only epilimnetic (point or integrated) sampling is undertaken. Chlorophyll concentrations of a water sample collected in the thermocline is compared to the integrated epilimnetic sample. Greater chlorophyll levels of the point sample, in conjunction with microscopic examination of the samples (see Phytoplankton section below), confirm the presence of such a population of algae. These populations should be monitored as they may be an indication of increased nutrient loading into the lake.

Turbidity *

Turbidity is a measure of suspended material in the water column such as sediments and planktonic organisms. The greater the turbidity of a given water body the lower the Secchi Disk transparency and the greater the amount of particulate matter present. Turbidity is measured as nephelometric turbidity units (NTU), a standardized method among researchers. Turbidity levels are generally low in New Hampshire reflecting the pristine condition of the majority of our lakes and ponds. Increasing turbidity values can be an indication of increasing lake productivity or can reflect improper land use practices within the watershed which destabilize the surrounding landscape and allow sediment flushing into the lake.

While Secchi Disk measurements will integrate the clarity of the water column from the surface waters down to the depth of disappearance, turbidity measurements are collected at discrete depths from the surface down to the lake bottom. Such discrete sampling can identify layering algal populations (previously discussed) that are undetectable when measuring Secchi Disk transparency alone.

Dissolved Color

The dissolved color of lakes is generally due to dissolved organic matter from *humic substances*, which are naturally-occurring polyphenolic compounds leached from decayed vegetation. Highly colored or "stained" lakes have a "tea" color. Such substances generally do not threaten water quality except as they diminish sunlight penetration into deep waters. Increases in dissolved watercolor can be an indication of increased development within the watershed as many land clearing activities (construction, deforestation, and the resulting increased run-off) add additional organic material to lakes. Natural fluctuations of dissolved color occur when storm events increase drainage from wetlands areas within the watershed. As suspended sediment is a diffi-
cult and expensive test to undertake, both dissolved color and chlorophyll information are important when interpreting the Secchi Disk transparency.

Dissolved color is measured on a comparative scale that uses standard chloroplantinate dyes and is designated as a color unit or ptu. Lakes with color below 10 ptu are very clear, 10 to 20 ptu are slightly colored, 20 to 40 ptu are lightly tea colored, 40 to 80 ptu are tea colored and greater than 80 ptu indicates highly colored waters. Generally the majority of New Hampshire lakes have color between 20 to 30 ptu.

**Total Phosphorus**

Of the two "nutrients" most important to the growth of aquatic plants, nitrogen and phosphorus, it is generally observed that phosphorus is the more limiting to plant growth, and therefore the more important to monitor and control. Phosphorus is generally present in lower concentrations, and its sources arise primarily through human related activity in a watershed. Nitrogen can be fixed from the atmosphere by many bloom-forming blue-green bacteria, and thus it is difficult to control. The total phosphorus includes all dissolved phosphorus as well as phosphorus contained in or adhered to suspended particulates such as sediment and plankton. As little as 10 parts per billion of phosphorus in a lake can cause an algal bloom.

Generally, in the more pristine lakes, phosphorus values are higher after spring melt when the lake receives the majority of runoff from its surrounding watershed. The nutrient is used by the algae and plants which in turn die and sink to the lake bottom causing surface water phosphorus concentrations to decrease as the summer progresses. Lakes with nutrient loading from human activities and sources (Agriculture, Logging, Sediment Erosion, Septic Systems, etc.) will show greater concentrations of nutrients as the summer progresses or after major storm events.

**Streamflow**

Streamflow, when collected in conjunction with depth contour information, is a measure of the volume of water traversing a given stream stretch over a period of time and is often expressed as cubic meters per second. Knowledge of the streamflow is important when determining the amount of nutrients and other pollutants that enter a lake. Knowledge of the streamflow in conjunction with nutrient concentrations, for instance, will provide the information necessary to calculate phosphorus loading values and will in turn be useful in discerning the more impacted areas within a watershed.

**pH**

The pH is a way of expressing the acidic level of lake water, and is generally measured with an electrical probe sensitive to hydrogen ion activity. The pH scale has a range of 1 (very acidic) to 14 (very "basic" or alkaline) and is logarithmic (i.e.: changes in 1 pH unit reflect a ten times difference in hydrogen ion concentration). Most aquatic organisms tolerate a limited range of pH and most fish species require a pH of 6.5 or higher for successful growth and reproduction.

**Alkalinity**

Alkalinity is a measure of the buffering capacity of the lake water. The higher the value the more acid that can be neutralized. Typically lakes in New Hampshire have
low alkalinites due to the absence of carbonates and other natural buffering minerals in the bedrock and soils of lake watersheds.

Decreasing alkalinity over a period of a few years can have serious effects on the lake ecosystem. In a study on an experimental acidified lake in Canada by Schindler, gradual lowering of the pH from 6.8 to 5.0 in an 8-year period resulted in the disappearance of some aquatic species, an increase in nuisance species of algae and a decline in the condition and reproduction rate of fish. During the first year of Schindler's study the pH remained unchanged while the alkalinity declined to 20 percent of the pre-treatment value. The decline in alkalinity was sufficient to trigger the disappearance of zooplankton species, which in turn caused a decline in the "condition" of fish species that fed on the zooplankton.

The analysis of alkalinity employed by the Center for Freshwater Biology includes use of a dilute titrant allowing an order of magnitude greater sensitivity and precision than the standard method. Two endpoints are recorded during each analysis. The first endpoint (gray color of dye; pH endpoint of 5.1) approximates low level alkalinity values, while the second endpoint (pink dye color; pH endpoint of 4.6) approximates the alkalinity values recorded historically, such as NH Fish and Game data, with the methyl-orange endpoint method.

The average alkalinity of lakes throughout New Hampshire is low, approximately 6.5 mg per liter (calcium carbonate alkalinity). When alkalinity falls below 2 mg per liter the pH of waters can greatly fluctuate. Alkalinity levels are most critical in the spring when acid loadings from snowmelt and run-off are high, and many aquatic species are in their early, and most susceptible, stages of their life cycle.

**Specific Conductivity**

The specific conductance of a water sample indicates concentrations of dissolved salts. Leaking septic systems and deicing salt runoff from highways can cause high conductivity values. Fertilizers and other pollutants can also increase the conductivity of the water. Conductivity is measured in micromhos (the opposite of the measurement of resistance ohms) per centimeter, more commonly referred to as micro-Siemens (μS).

**Dissolved Oxygen and Free Carbon Dioxide**

Oxygen is an essential component for the survival of aquatic life. Submergent plants and algae take in carbon dioxide and create oxygen through photosynthesis by day. Respiration by both animals and plants uses up oxygen continually and creates carbon dioxide. Dissolved oxygen profiles determine the extent of declining oxygen concentrations in the lower waters. High carbon dioxide values are indicative of low oxygen conditions and accumulating organic matter. For both gases, as the temperature of the water decreases, more gas can be dissolved in the water.

The typical pattern of clear, unproductive lakes is a slight decline in hypolimnetic oxygen as the summer progresses. Oxygen in the lower waters is important for maintaining a fit, reproducing, cold water fishery. Trout and salmon generally require oxygen concentrations above 5 mg per liter (parts per million) in the cool deep waters. On the other hand, carp and catfish can survive very low oxygen conditions. Oxygen above the lake bottom is important in limiting the release of nutrients from the sediments and minimizing the collection of undecomposed organic matter.
Bacteria, fungi and other decomposers in the bottom waters break down organic matter originating from the watershed or generated by the lake. This process uses up oxygen and produces carbon dioxide. In lakes where organic matter accumulation is high, oxygen depletion can occur. In highly stratified eutrophic lakes the entire hypolimnion can remain un oxygenated or anaerobic until fall mixing occurs.

The oxygen peaks occurring at surface and mid-lake depths during the day are quite common in many lakes. These characteristic heterograde oxygen curves are the result of the large amounts of oxygen, the by-product of photosynthesis, collecting in regions of high algal concentrations. If the peak occurs in the thermocline of the lake, metalimnetic algal populations (discussed above) may be present.

**Underwater Light**

Underwater light available to photosynthetic organisms is measured with an underwater photometer which is much like the light meter of a camera (only waterproof!). The photic zone of a lake is the volume of water capable of supporting photosynthesis. It is generally considered to be delineated by the water’s surface and the depth that light is reduced to one percent surface iridescence by the absorption and scattering properties of the lake water. The one percent depth is sometimes termed the compensation depth. Knowledge of light penetration is important when considering lake productivity and in studies of submerged vegetation. Discontinuity (abrupt changes in the slope) of the profiles could be due to metalimnetic layering of algae or other particulates (discussed above). The underwater photometer allows the investigator to measure light at depths below the Secchi Disk depth to supplement the water clarity information.

**Indicator Bacteria**

Certain disease causing organisms, pathogenic bacteria, viruses and parasites, can be spread through contact with polluted waters. Faulty septic systems, sewer leaks, combined sewer overflows and the illegal dumping of wastes from boats can contribute fecal material containing these pathogens. Typical water testing for pathogens involves the use of detecting coliform bacteria. These bacteria are not usually considered harmful themselves but they are relatively easy to detect and can be screened for quickly. Thus, they make good surrogates for the more difficult to detect pathogens.

Total coliform includes all coliform bacteria that arise from the gut of animals or from vegetative materials. Fecal coliform are those specific organisms that inhabit the gut of warm blooded animals. Another indicator organism Fecal streptococcus (sometimes referred to as enterococcus) also can be monitored. The ratio of fecal coliform to fecal strep may be useful in suggesting the type of animal source responsible for the contamination. In 1991, the State of New Hampshire changed the indicator organism of preference to E. Coli which is a specific type of fecal coliform bacteria thought to be a better indicator of human contamination. The new state standard requires Class A “bathing waters” to be under 88 organisms (referred to as colony forming units; cfu) per 100 milliliters of lakewater.

Ducks and geese are often a common cause of high coliform concentrations at specific lake sites. While waterfowl are important components to the natural and aesthetic qualities of lakes that we all enjoy, it is poor management practice to encourage these birds by feeding them. The lake and surrounding area provides enough healthy
and natural food for the birds and feeding them stale bread or crackers does nothing more than import additional nutrients into the lake and allows for increased plant growth. As birds also are a host to the parasite that causes "swimmers itch", waterfowl roosting areas offer a greater chance for infestation to occur. Thus while leaving offerings for our feathered friends is enticing, the results can prove to be detrimental to the lake system and to human health.

**Phytoplankton**

The planktonic community includes microbial organisms that represent diverse life forms, containing photosynthetic as well as non-photosynthetic types, and including bacteria, algae, crustaceans and insect larvae (the insect larvae and zooplankton are discussed below in separate sections). Because planktonic algae or "phytoplankton" tend to undergo rapid seasonal cycles on a time scale of days and weeks, the levels of populations found should be considered to be most representative of the time of collection and not necessarily of other times during the ice-free season, especially the early spring and late fall periods.

The composition and concentration of phytoplankton can be indicative of the trophic status of a lake. Seasonal patterns do occur and must be considered. For example diatoms, tend to be most abundant in April-June and October-November, in the surface or epilimnentic layers of New Hampshire lakes. As the summer progresses, the dominant types might shift to green algae or golden algae. By late season blue-green bacteria generally dominate. In nutrient rich lakes, nuisance green algae and/or bluegreen bacteria might dominate continually. After fall mixing diatoms might again be found to bloom.

**Zooplankton**

There are three groups of zooplankton that are generally prevalent in lakes: the protozoa, rotifers and crustaceans. Most research has been devoted to the last two groups although protozoa may be found in substantial amounts. Of the rotifers and the crustaceans, time and budgetary constraints usually make it necessary to sample only the larger zooplankton (macrozooplankton; larger than 80 or 150 microns; 1 million microns make up a meter). Thus, zooplankton analysis is generally restricted only to the larger crustaceans. Crustacean zooplankton are very sensitive to pollutants and are commonly used to indicate the presence of toxic substances in water. The crustaceans can be divided into two groups, the cladocerans (which include the "water fleas") and the copepods.

Macrozooplankton are an important component in the lake system. The filter feeding of the herbivorous ("grazing") species may control the population size of selected species of phytoplankton. The larger zooplankton can be an important food source for juvenile and adult planktivorous fish. All zooplankton play a part in the recycling of nutrients within the lake. Like the phytoplankton, zooplankton, tend to undergo rapid seasonal cycles. Thus, the zooplankton population density and diversity should be considered to be most representative of the time of collection and not necessarily of other times during the ice-free season, especially the early spring and late fall periods.
Macroinvertebrates *

Macroinvertebrates generally refer to the aquatic insect community living near the bottom substrate (i.e. sediments) while other invertebrate groups such as the crayfish, leeches and the aquatic worms are also included. Like the phytoplankton and zooplankton, previously discussed, the macroinvertebrates undergo seasonal cycles and are most representative of conditions for particular periods of the year. The mayflies are probably the most well known example of a seasonal aquatic macroinvertebrate as mayfly populations metamorphosize into adults as the water temperatures increase in the spring and thus giving rise to the name “mayflies”. Macroinvertebrates are also sensitive to environmental conditions such as streamflow, temperature and food availability and are most representative of particular habitats along the stream continuum (i.e. some organisms prefer slower moving stream reaches while others prefer rapidly flowing waters).

Macroinvertebrates are an essential component to a healthy aquatic habitat. Macroinvertebrates help decompose organic matter entering the system such as leaves and twigs and also serve as a food source for many fish species.

While some macroinvertebrates are capable of breathing air as we do, others have gills and utilize oxygen dissolved in the water much as fish do. Macroinvertebrates also vary in their tolerance to depleting dissolved oxygen concentrations making them a good indicator of pollutants coming into the water body. The caddis flies (Trichoptera), the mayflies (Ephemeroptera) and the stoneflies (Plecoptera) are often considered highly sensitive to pollution while the “true” flies (Diptera) are often considered highly tolerant to pollution. However, exceptions to the above categorizations are often encountered.

A variety of indices have been proposed to characterize water bodies over a gradient of pollution levels ranging from least polluted to most polluted scenarios and often designated by assigning a numerical delineator (i.e. 1 is least polluted while 10 is most polluted). Such an index, the Hilsenhoff Biotic Index (HBI), or a modification thereof, is commonly used by stream monitoring programs around the country. Macroinvertebrate data are useful in discerning the more impacted areas within the watershed where corrective efforts should be directed. Unlike chemical measurements that represent ambient conditions in the water body, the macroinvertebrate community composition integrates the water quality conditions over a longer period (months to years) and can identify “hot” spots missed by chemical sampling. If you are interested in more information regarding macroinvertebrate monitoring contact the LLMP coordinator.

Fish Condition

The assessment of fish species “health” is another biological indicator of water quality. Because fish are at the top of the food chain, their condition should reflect not only water quality changes that affect them directly but also those changes that affect their food supply. The fish condition index utilized by the New Hampshire Fish Condition Program is based on two components; fish scale analysis and a fish condition index.

Like tree trunks, fish scales have annual growth rings (annuli) that reflect their growth history and hence, provide a long-term record of past conditions in the lake. The fish condition index, based upon length and weight measurements, is a good indicator of the fish’s health at the time of collection.
The resulting fish condition data can be compared among different lakes or among different years, or the index for a particular species can be compared to standard length-to-weight relationships that have been developed by fisheries biologists for many important fish species. In the end, the “health” of the various fish species reflects the overall water quality in the respective lake or pond.

Zebra Mussels

Zebra mussels (Dreissena polymorpha) are non-native, freshwater mollusks. The veligers (larval form) are free swimming, nearly invisible, and profuse. Adult zebra mussel shells are elongate (D-shaped), about the size of a thumbnail and are usually striped. Zebra Mussels are the only freshwater mussel that can attach to objects using sticky threads (byssal threads like those found on the marine blue mussels). These threads allow them to colonize quickly and reach densities of 100,000 or more mussels per square yard. The mussels have an average lifespan of 3.5 to 5 years. A gritty feeling on your boat’s hull or other immersed surfaces might indicate that larval zebra mussels have settled.

Zebra mussels originated in the drainage basins of the Black, Caspian, and Aral seas of eastern Europe and have been in western Europe freshwaters since the 1700s. Since first being introduced to North America in 1986, zebra mussels have dramatically altered the balance of freshwater systems and fisheries. These small water dwelling animals have also caused millions of dollars in expenses for industrial water users, drinking water facilities, commercial and recreational boaters, farmers, and other groups and organizations in Canada and the Great Lakes region.

The range occupied by these unwelcome visitors has expanded and continues to grow rapidly. In North America, sightings have been recorded as far north as the Saint Lawrence River near Quebec, as far east as the lower portion of the Hudson River, as far south as the Mississippi River near Vicksburg, and as far west as the Arkansas River in Oklahoma.

In 1993, zebra mussel sightings were confirmed in New England (Lake Champlain). The Lake Champlain population has existed for at least three years, if not longer. Thus, New Hampshire residents and boaters are being encouraged to arm themselves with knowledge about the natural history and geographic spread of the mussels. Interstate boaters and anglers, in particular, should become familiar with boating and fishing practices that decrease the likelihood that zebra mussels will be transferred from an infested water body to an uninfested one.

The infestation risk factor for any particular water body is determined mainly by the amount and type of boat traffic it supports and the chemical characteristics and temperature it maintains. While the goal is to prevent the mussels from becoming established in New England waters, zebra mussels have proven to be adaptable creatures able to survive in a growing range of environmental conditions. Cooperative monitoring activities coordinated by the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program will help determine if and when zebra mussels become established in this region. If zebra mussels are found, information about control techniques can help those concerned choose the best method to reduce the destructive impacts of the mussels.

Take responsibilities for our waters. If you’ve been boating in fresh water outside of New England within the past 10 days and plan to launch locally, please...

Inspect your boat and trailer for weeds. Remove and discard any you find. Zebra mussels are commonly found on aquatic plants in areas of infestation.
Flush the cooling system, bilge areas and live wells with tap water.
Leave unused bait behind and discard bait bucket water away from surface waters.
Keep your boat out of water to dry for 48 hours. If it is visibly fouled by algae, leave it out until the exterior is completely dry or...
Wash down the hull at a car wash. Hot (140 degree F) water kills zebra mussels and veligers and high pressure spray helps remove them. Wash fouling off your boat away from water sources!
Learn more about the zebra mussel threat in order to be forewarned of the situation and prevent costly repairs or destructive responses.
Share information, ideas and monitoring tasks with other members of your lake association, watershed council, marina club, conservation commission, angling group or civic organization.
Report any sightings to the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program. Preserve specimens in alcohol if possible, note the location where they were found, and send them in to confirm the identification.

To receive more information, request an educational presentation for your next group meeting, become involved in monitoring efforts, or confirm an identification, contact:

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Understanding Lake Aging  
(Eutrophication)

by: Robert Craycraft  Educational Program Coordinator,  
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A common concern among New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (NH LLMP) participants is a perceived increase in the density and abundance of aquatic plants in the shallows, increases in the amount of microscopic plant “algae” growth (detected as greener water), and water transparency decreases; what is known as eutrophication. Eutrophication is a natural process by which all lakes age and progress from clear, pristine lakes to green, nutrient enriched lakes on a geological time frame of thousands of years. Much like the fertilizers applied to our lawns, nutrients that enter our lakes stimulate plant growth and culminate in greener (and in turn less clear) waters. Some lakes age at a faster rate than others due to natural attributes: watershed area relative to lake area, slope of the land surrounding the lake, soil type, mean lake depth, etc. Since our New Hampshire lakes were created during the last ice-age which ended about 10,000 years ago, we should have a natural continuum of lakes ranging from pristine to enriched.

Classification criteria are often used to categorize lakes into what are known as trophic states, in other words, levels of lake plant and algae productivity or “greenness” Refer to Table 5 below for a summary of commonly used eutrophication parameters.

Oligotrophic lakes are considered “unproductive” pristine systems and are characterized by high water clarities, low nutrient concentrations, low algae concentrations, minimal levels of aquatic plant “weed” growth, and high dissolved oxygen concentrations near the lake bottom. Eutrophic lakes are considered “highly productive” enriched systems characterized by low water transparencies, high nutrient concentrations, 

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Oligotrophic “pristine”</th>
<th>Mesotrophic “transitional”</th>
<th>Eutrophic “enriched”</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Chlorophyll a (µg/l) *</td>
<td>&lt;3.0</td>
<td>3.0-7.0</td>
<td>&gt;7.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Water Transparency (meters) *</td>
<td>&gt;4.0</td>
<td>2.5-4.0</td>
<td>&lt;2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Phosphorus (µg/l) *</td>
<td>&lt;15.0</td>
<td>15.0-25.0</td>
<td>&gt;25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolved Oxygen (saturation) #</td>
<td>high to moderate</td>
<td>moderate to low</td>
<td>low to zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroscopic Plant (Weed) Abundance</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes classification criteria employed by Forsberg and Ryding (1980).  
# Denotes dissolved oxygen concentrations near the lake bottom.

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high algae concentrations, large stands of aquatic plants and very low dissolved oxygen concentrations near the lake bottom. Mesotrophic lakes have qualities between those of oligotrophic and eutrophic lakes and are characterized by moderate water transparencies, moderate nutrient concentrations, moderate algae growth, moderate aquatic plant “weed” growth and decreasing dissolved oxygen concentrations near the lake bottom.

Is a pristine, oligotrophic, lake “better than” an enriched, eutrophic, lake? Not necessarily! As indicated above, lakes will naturally exhibit varying degrees of productivity. Some lakes will naturally be more susceptible to eutrophication than others due to their natural attributes and in turn have aged more rapidly. This is not necessarily a bad thing as our best bass fishing lakes tend to be more mesotrophic to eutrophic than oligotrophic and an ultra-oligotrophic lake (extremely pristine) will not support a very healthy cold water fishery. However, human related activities can augment the aging process (what is known as cultural eutrophication) and result in a transition from a pristine system to an enriched system in tens of years rather than the natural transitional period that should take thousands of years. Cultural eutrophication is particularly a concern for northern New England lakes where large tracts of forested lands are being developed, culminating in an increased susceptibility of these lakes to sediment and nutrient loadings which augment the eutrophication process.

Additionally, other pollutants such as heavy metals, herbicides, insecticides and petroleum products might also affect your lake’s “health”. A “healthy” lake, as far as eutrophication is concerned, is one in which the various aquatic plants and animals are minimally impacted so that nutrients and other materials are processed efficiently. We can liken this process to a well-managed pasture: nutrients stimulate the growth of grasses and other plants that are eaten by grazers like cows and sheep. As long as producers and grazers are balanced, a good amount of nutrients can be processed through the system. Impact the grazers and the grass will overgrow and nuisance weeds will appear, even if nutrients remain the same. In a lake, the producers are the algae and aquatic weeds while the grazers are the microscopic animals (zooplankton) and aquatic insects. These organisms can be very susceptible to a wide range of pollutants at very low concentrations. If impacted, the lake can become much more productive and the fishery will be impacted as well since these same organisms are an important food source for most fish at some stage of their life.

Development upon the landscape can negatively affect water quality in a number of ways:

- **Removal of shore side vegetation and loss of wetlands** - shore side vegetation (what is known as riparian vegetation) and wetlands provide a protective buffer that “traps” pollutants before reaching the lake. These buffers remove materials both chemically (through biological uptake) and physically (settling materials out). As riparian buffers are removed and wetlands lost, pollutant materials are more likely to enter the lake and in turn, favor declining water quality.

- **Excessive fertilizer applications** - fertilizers entering the lake can stimulate aquatic plant and algal growth and in extreme cases result in noxious algal blooms. Increases in algal growth tend to diminish water transparency and under extreme cases culminate in surface “scums” that can wash up on the shoreline and can also produce unpleasant smells as the material decomposes. Exces-
sive nutrient concentrations also favor algal forms known to produce toxins which irritate the skin and under extreme conditions, are dangerous when ingested.

- **Increased organic matter loading** - organic matter (leaves, grass clippings, etc.) are a major source of nutrients in the aquatic environment. As the vegetative matter decomposes nutrients are “freed up” and can become available for aquatic plant and algal growth. In general, we are not concerned with this material entering the lake naturally (leaf senescence in the fall) but rather excessive loading of this material as occurs when residents dump or rake leaf litter and grass clippings into the lake. This material not only provides large nutrient reserves which can stimulate aquatic plant and algal growth but also makes great habitat for leaches and other potentially undesirable organisms in swimming areas.

- **Septic problems** - faulty septic systems are a big concern as they can be a primary source of water pollution around our lakes. Septic systems are loaded with nutrients and can also be a health threat when not functioning properly.

- **Loss of vegetative cover and the creation of impervious surfaces** - A forested watershed offers the best protection against pollutant runoff. Trees and tall vegetation intercept heavy rains that can erode soils and surface materials. The roots of these plants keep the soils in place, process nutrients and absorb moisture so the soils do not wash out. Impervious surfaces (paved roads, parking lots, building roofs, etc.) reduce the water’s capacity to infiltrate into the ground, and in turn, go through nature’s water purification system. As water seeps into the soil, pollutants are removed from the runoff through absorption onto soil particles. Biological processes detoxify substances and/or immobilize substances. Surface water runoff over impervious surfaces also increases water velocities that favor the transport of a greater load of suspended and dissolved pollutants into your lake.

**How can you minimize your water quality impacts?**

- Minimize fertilizer applications whenever possible. Most people apply far more fertilizers than necessary, with the excess eventually draining into your lake. This not only applies to those immediately adjacent to the lake but to everybody in the watershed. Pollutants in all areas of the watershed will ultimately make their way into your lake. Have your soil tested (the UNH Soils Analytical Laboratory offers soil testing for a nominal fee, contact your county UNH Cooperative Extension Office for further information) to find out how much fertilizer and what type you really need. Sometimes just an application of crushed lime will release enough nutrients to fit the bill. If you do use fertilizer try to use low phosphorus, slow release nitrogen varieties.

- Don’t dump leaf litter or leaves into the lake. Compost the material or take it to a proper waste disposal center. Do not fill in wetland areas. Do not create or enhance beach areas with sand (contains phosphorus, smothers aquatic habitat, fills in lake as it gets transported away by currents and wind).

- Septic systems will not function efficiently without the proper precautionary maintenance. Have your septic system inspected every two to four years and
pumped out when necessary. Since the septic system is such an expensive investment often costing around $10,000 for a complete overhaul, it is advantageous to assure proper care is taken to prolong the system's life. Additionally, following proper maintenance practices will reduce water quality degradation. Refer to:

*Septic Systems, How they work and how to keep them working.* $1.00 ea
University of New Hampshire Publications Center (603) 862-2346

*Pipeline: Fall 1995 Vol. 6, No. 4. Maintaining Your Septic System-A Guide for Homeowners.* ($0.20 ea. plus shipping & handling) 1-800-624-8301

- Maintain shore side (riparian) vegetative cover when new construction is undertaken. For those who have pre-existing houses but lack vegetative buffers, consider shoreline plantings aimed at diminishing the pollution load into your lake. Refer to:

*Planting Shoreland Areas* (no charge) University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Publication Center. (603) 862-2346

*A Guide to Developing and Re-Developing Shoreland Property in New Hampshire: A Blueprint to Help You Live by the Water.* North Country Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. 103 Main Street-Suite #1., Meredith NH 03253-9266 (603) 279-6546

*Buffers for Wetlands and Surface Waters: A Guidebook for New Hampshire Municipalities.* Audubon Society of New Hampshire. 3 Silk Farm Road, Concord NH 03301 (603) 224-9909 (free for towns, $5.00 for others).

- If you have shoreland property review the New Hampshire Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA). The CSPA sets legal regulations aimed at protecting water quality. If you have any questions regarding the act or need further information contact the *Shoreline Protection Act Coordinator* at (603) 271-3503.
Biotoxins: Toxic Chemicals Produced by Cyanobacteria

By: James F. Haney and John J. Sasner
UNH Center for Freshwater Biology

This is an expanded version of an article that appeared in the February 2000 issue of LAKESIDE: a publication of the New Hampshire Lakes Association.

Last summer, George Linscott walked Sam and Magic along the western shore of Lake Champlain. The Labrador retrievers played in the water, but shortly thereafter showed signs of distress. The dogs were rushed to a veterinarian and died later that day. Samples of the water tested indicated the likely cause of the deaths was a toxin produced by Anabaena, a type of cyanobacteria, formerly named blue-green algae. High on an alpine meadow in Switzerland cattle die after drinking from what was thought to be a pristine stream. Once again cyanobacteria appeared to be the culprit. These are recent examples of the growing number of cases of cyanobacteria-related deaths of pets and livestock reported worldwide.

Cyanobacteria have been long recognized as problem “algae” in lakes. In addition to imparting bad tastes and odors to water, these microscopic lake inhabitants also produce highly toxic chemicals called biotoxins. Three of the most common toxic cyanobacteria in New Hampshire lakes are Anabaena, Aphanizomenon and Microcystis, commonly referred to as “Annie, Phannie and Mike.” Curiously, their toxicity may change, depending on the lake and time of year and some strains never produce toxins.

Lake biotoxins consist of a variety of chemical compounds. They are often categorized according to their mode of toxicity as (1) neurotoxins, those that interfere with the conduction and transmission of nerve impulses and (2) hepatotoxins, those that cause hemorrhaging of the liver tissue. Whereas the effects of the liver toxins may be seen after hours or days, acute poisoning by neurotoxins may show almost immediate symptoms, such as a tingling sensation followed by paralysis. Both types of biotoxins may be fatal in large doses. Because of widespread damage caused by “red tides”, there is much more known about toxic marine algae. There are, however, surprising similarities between freshwater and marine biotoxins. For example, researchers at the University of New Hampshire discovered that neosaxitoxin, a neurotoxin produced by Aphanizomenon (Phannie) is nearly identical to the toxins produced by marine dinoflagellates that cause “red tides” and paralytic shellfish poisons.

Cyanobacteria occur naturally in virtually all lakes. Problems most often occur when excessive nutrients are added to lakes, causing a burst of growth in populations of cyanobacteria and the formation of conspicuous “blooms” along the lakeshore, where they appear as a green film or as blue-green flakes floating just below the surface. When toxic, such accumulations pose the greatest health threat if the water containing the
the bloom is ingested. Direct contact with the skin may cause skin irritations, but does not usually cause serious health effects.

The field of biotoxins research is relatively young and many questions remain unanswered. For example, it is not known what conditions cause certain cyanobacteria to become toxic nor how they may benefit from producing such substances. Since cyanobacteria are among the oldest organisms on earth, these toxins may have evolved long before the presence of other species, such as fish and humans. It is thought that some toxic compounds may in fact be used by cyanobacteria to assist in gathering scarce nutrients necessary for growth, such as iron and carbon.

Using improved methods of detection, a research team from the Biotoxins Lab at the UNH Center for Freshwater Biology, completed its first field season last summer investigating toxins in 50 lakes throughout New Hampshire. The focus of this study was to determine the types of lakes and regions of the state in which the hepatotoxin microcystin are present and also whether these toxins bioaccumulate in the food web of lakes, such as in the crayfish, mussels and fish. Although samples are still being processed and this work has not yet been fully analyzed, preliminary results show that microcystins occur in many lakes throughout the state. Also, the level of microcystins is correlated with the concentration of phosphorus in lake water. This suggests that eutrophication may have a direct linkage to the abundance of biotoxins in our lakes. These findings provide yet another important reason to protect our waters from nutrient pollution and emphasize the need to continually monitor the health of our lakes.

Should New Hampshire lake users be concerned about biotoxins? In most of our lakes concentrations of biotoxins are well below levels that pose a health threat. When swimming it would be wise to avoid areas of the lake where a scum of cyanobacteria have collected. It is especially important to prevent children from playing in such areas, as they may accidentally drink the contaminated lake water. Likewise, pets should be refrained from drinking from areas with conspicuous accumulations of blue-green bacteria.
REFERENCES


Figure 11. Location of the current and historical Crystal Lake in-lake and tributary sampling stations, Enfield New Hampshire.
Figure 12. Crystal Lake, 2003. Seasonal Secchi Disk (water transparency) and chlorophyll \( a \) trends for Site 1 Deep. The Secchi Disk transparency data are reported to the nearest 0.1 meters while the chlorophyll \( a \) data are reported to the nearest 0.1 parts per billion (ppb).

Figure 13. Crystal Lake, 2003. Seasonal Secchi Disk (water transparency) and dissolved color trends for Site 1 Deep. The Secchi Disk transparency data are reported to the nearest 0.1 meters while the dissolved color data are reported to the nearest 0.1 chloroplatinate unit (CPU).

Note: the overlay of the Secchi Disk data with chlorophyll \( a \) and dissolved color data is intended to provide a visual depiction of the impacts of chlorophyll \( a \) and dissolved color on water transparency measurements (e.g. higher chlorophyll \( a \) and dissolved color concentrations often correspond to shallower water transparencies).
Figure 14. Comparison of the 2003 Crystal Lake, Site 1 Deep, lay monitor Secchi Disk transparency data with historical water quality data collected in conjunction with the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (1989-2002). The shaded regions on the graph denote the ranges characteristic of low, moderate and high Secchi Disk transparencies. The higher the Secchi Disk transparency the clearer the water. Secchi Disk readings are measured to the nearest tenth (0.1) of a meter.

Figure 15. Comparison of the 2003 Crystal Lake, Site 1 Deep, lay monitor chlorophyll a data with historical water quality data collected in conjunction with the New Hampshire Lakes Lay Monitoring Program (1989-2002). The shaded regions on the graph denote the ranges characteristic of low and moderate chlorophyll a concentrations. The higher the chlorophyll a concentration the greener the water (i.e. more algal growth).
## APPENDIX A

### Lakes Lay Monitoring Program, U.N.H.

[Lay Monitor Data]

Crystal Lake, Town of Enfield New Hampshire

-- subset of trophic indicators, Site 1 Deep, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Secchi Disk Transparency (meters)</th>
<th>Chl a (ug/L)</th>
<th>Dissolved Color (CPU)</th>
<th>Alkalinity gray end point @ pH 5.1 (mg/L)</th>
<th>Alkalinity pink end pt. @ pH 4.6 (mg/L)</th>
<th>Total Phosphorus (ug/L)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Deep</td>
<td>6/8/03</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<< End of 2003 data listing; 19 records >>