

# More Algae Blooms Found in Lake, Producing Call for Upgraded Septic Systems

By Mirror Staff

The Lake George Waterkeeper documented 26 algae blooms in Lake George this summer, The Fund for Lake George has announced.

"People who have spent decades on the lake told us they'd never seen anything like this," said Peter Bauer, the executive director of The Fund for Lake George.

Florence Connors of Assembly Point was among the individuals who contacted The Fund.

"I've been here since I was ten, and the lake simply isn't as clean as it once was," said Connors. "I don't drink the water, and the bottoms of our boats are coated with slime."

Connors said there was evidence of algae in her bay for most of the summer, interfering with swimming and other activities.

The heavy rains this summer may have contributed to the number of algae blooms found in the lake, but the weather's no excuse, said Bauer.

"The rains simply revealed the failures around the lake to maintain adequate septic systems, vegetative buffers and storm water controls," said Bauer.

Moreover, Bauer said, similar outbreaks may have occurred in the past, but were never documented.

In July, Bauer said, the Lake George Waterkeeper identified unusually extensive algae growth in Bolton Bay and confirmed that it was an algae bloom.

"The Waterkeeper asked the public to report any other areas in the lake where there may be suspected algae blooms. A number of long-time residents on the lake reported excessive algae in many locations and the Waterkeeper visited those sites," said Bauer.

The Waterkeeper documented 26 additional locations of algae growths in depths of up to 15 feet, said Bauer.

"We asked the public to contact us if they were seeing algae that was more intense and much more widespread than in previous years," said Chris Navitsky, the Lake George Waterkeeper. "The response that we received and subsequent site observations surprised us."

According to Bauer, the causes

of algae blooms are complex and often involve multiple factors, such as use of lawn fertilizers, dumping of lawn debris into the lake or associated stream, inadequate septic and stormwater control systems, untreated stormwater from roadways dumping directly into streams and the lake, as well as high rain events, which deliver a large pulse of nutrients to the lake.

"Algae follow nutrients. Where nutrients are available in high quantities, algae will flourish," said Kathy Bozony, Natural Resource Specialist with the Lake George Waterkeeper. "While the specific cause on an algae bloom is difficult to pinpoint, there are many steps people can take to limit the nutrient loading that feeds algae."

One such step, improving septic systems, will become a priority of The Fund for Lake George and the Waterkeeper, said Peter Bauer.

"New York's regulation of septic systems are woefully inadequate and lag behind the rest of the country," said White. "The Lake George Park Commission has clear authority to implement standards for systems in the Lake George watershed, and we're researching past efforts to do that with the goal of resuscitating them."

According to Mike White, the executive director of the Lake George Park Commission, the Lake George Watershed Conference is the best vehicle to explore the question of whether new regulations or standards for septic systems should be adopted.

"The Lake George Watershed Conference brings together the multiple agencies and municipalities concerned with onsite wastewater systems," said White. "It's a stated goal of the Watershed Conference to address septic systems, and there is funding for that." The Lake George Waterkeeper's underwater photos of algae blooms can be viewed and downloaded from [www.lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org](http://www.lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org). "We're continuing to take reports from the public regarding algae and excessive aquatic plant growth and we will continue to document all new sites," said Navitsky. "All reports should be made to Kathy Bozony of the Lake George Waterkeeper at (518) 668-5913 x 303 or by email at [info@lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org](mailto:info@lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org).