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COMO LAKE

Make a difference



Como Lake Alum Treatment Planned in Spring 2020

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) is committed to improving water quality in Como Lake, a beloved water resource in Saint Paul for over a century.

Despite efforts to address the water quality in the lake over the years, decades of stormwater runoff and pollution have made a new Como Lake plan necessary.

Como Lake Plan

The biggest challenge facing Como Lake today is too much phosphorus, a pollutant carried to the lake through runoff in storm drains. Over time, high levels of phosphorus—three times higher than Minnesota standards—have led to algae blooms that choke the oxygen from the lake and lead to fish kills. While CRWD and its partners have already worked to reduce phosphorus levels by 20% in the past two decades, water quality in the lake remains poor.

The other main concern in Como Lake is an invasive aquatic plant known as curlyleaf pondweed. The plant is dominating Como Lake's ecosystem, making it difficult for native plants to survive. Decaying curlyleaf pondweed adds more phosphorus to the water when it dies off, so management is key to achieving CRWD's water quality goals.

CRWD, with guidance and support from the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have outlined the new Como Lake Water Management Plan implementing the industry's best practices, science and technology. The Como Lake plan identifies strategies to address the water quality issues, which includes treatment of the water over the course of several years, beginning in the spring of 2020 with herbicide and alum treatments.



About the Treatment

Alum (aluminum sulfate) will be applied to Como Lake this spring to reduce phosphorus being recycled inside of the lake.

Alum is commonly used in drinking water treatment and has been a safe lake management tool for decades.

The treatment is expected to dramatically reduce algae growth and improve water clarity and quality.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is alum?

Alum (also called aluminum sulfate) is a chemical compound that has historically been used in drinking water treatment and as a scientifically proven lake management tool.

Alum is safe for humans, pets and other aquatic wildlife. It has no known adverse effects.

What is an alum treatment?

An alum treatment consists of applying liquid alum below the surface of the water from a barge. When the alum comes into contact with the water, it turns into a fluffy non-toxic substance, or floc, called aluminum hydroxide. The floc settles to the bottom of the lake, it binds to phosphorus in the water and forms a barrier that prevents it from being consumed by algae.

When will this happen at Como Lake?

In the early spring, after the first thaw, when the lake is not being used as much for recreation.

It takes roughly 4-10 days to complete a whole-lake treatment of alum, depending on weather.

How will lake visitors and users be impacted?

Visitors can expect an immediate change in Como Lake with clearer water and fewer algae blooms.

Visitors will see the lake being treated this spring, and access to the lake for recreation may be restricted at times.

Water quality monitoring will occur throughout the treatment to ensure it is being applied safely and correctly for the best results.

Photo credit: Nine Mile Creek Watershed District



How can I learn more?

Visit capitolregionwd.org to learn more about the Como Lake plan and see how you can participate.

Public meetings will be held in February and March of 2020 to discuss project plans in greater detail. Look for details on Facebook.

Signs will be posted to alert people visiting the lake during the time of application.



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