

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## Como Lake Water Quality Improvements Expected

*Alum Treatment Planned the Week of May 18*

**SAINT PAUL (May 11, 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 improve water quality in the lake over the years, decades of stormwater runoff and pollution have made a new Como Lake plan necessary. The plan identifies strategies to improve water quality in Como Lake including an alum (aluminum sulfate) treatment to reduce phosphorous that will begin on May 18, 2020.

The biggest challenge facing Como Lake today is too much phosphorus, a pollutant carried to the lake through runoff in storm drains. Phosphorus comes from decaying organic matter like leaves, grass clippings, pet waste, and soil. Over time, high levels of phosphorus in the lake — three times higher than Minnesota standards — have led to algae blooms that choke the oxygen from the lake, leading to fish kills and strong odors mid-summer. CRWD and its partners have worked to reduce phosphorus flowing to the lake in stormwater runoff by 20% over the past two decades. Despite these efforts, Como Lake’s water quality remains poor due to continued runoff as well as the high levels of phosphorus that have built up in the lake over time. Excess phosphorous in the lake must be addressed to reach water quality goals.

The alum treatment in Como Lake is expected to last 3-5 days, depending upon weather. An alum treatment consists of applying liquid alum below the surface of the water from a boat. When the alum comes into contact with the water, it turns into a non-toxic substance, or floc, called aluminum hydroxide. As the floc settles in the lake, it binds to phosphorus in the water and on the lake bottom, forming a barrier that prevents it from being consumed by algae.

*“The alum treatment is needed to help reduce excess phosphorus in Como Lake and to bring the system back into balance for visitors and wildlife alike. CRWD completed an alum treatment in nearby Lake McCarrons in 2004 that resulted in immediate water quality improvements that have been largely sustained. Similar results are expected in Como Lake.” Britta Belden, Water Resource Project Manager*

Alum is safe for humans, pets, and wildlife. Visitors will see the lake being treated the week of May 18th, and access to paths around the lake and the east parking lot may be restricted at times. Signage will be

posted around the lake to keep visitors informed. Immediate improvements in water clarity are expected along with fewer algae blooms this summer and in the future.

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

Learn more at [capitolregionwd.org/comolake](http://capitolregionwd.org/comolake) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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