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<https://www.allotsego.com/bfs-lake-organizations-announce-otsego-lake-hab-testing-strategy/>

BFS, Lake Organizations Announce Otsego Lake HAB Testing Strategy



Otsego Lake Association members Rhonda and Doug Willies take water samples on Otsego Lake. (Photo by Dr. Kiyoko Yokota)

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SPRINGFIELD

SUNY Oneonta's Biological Field Station announced its 2023 Otsego Lake Research and Cyanobacteria Monitoring Plan as part of the ongoing effort to study and control harmful algal blooms in Otsego County. The sampling strategy will focus on variations in temperature, nutrients, algal and cyanobacteria abundance, and toxin concentration along depth gradients in the heavily-affected north end of the lake. Additionally, the BFS has increased watershed

stream monitoring and the state Department of Environmental Conservation will conduct its own lake sampling.

Samples will be taken from shoreline stations, including existing 2022 sites and a new location near Lakefront Park, at least weekly. There will be 10-12 open-water sites, including eight along main north-south and east-west transects in the north end of the lake and additional locations near the mid-lake buoy and Fairy Spring Park. The open-water collection sites will be measured from the surface to the bottom, with tests for nitrogen compounds, total phosphorous, microcystins and basic water quality parameters. The BFS has also ordered equipment to evaluate algal community species composition.

All samples will be tested for microcystins, with results posted on the BFS website. According to a release, an automated cyanotoxin testing system, the CAAS Cube, is expected to be delivered in late June. Initial samples were taken on June 1 and the BFS will soon release results.

In addition to the BFS testing, the Otsego Lake Association announced it has joined the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program, run by the DEC and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations. The partnership will provide Environmental Laboratory Approval Program-certified water quality data to prepare a DEC Nine Element Plan for comprehensive lake and watershed management. OLA members Rhonda and Doug Willies participated in the all-day CSLAP volunteer training at Lake George in May and successfully completed preliminary Otsego Lake sampling on June 5.

Despite the new testing plans, individuals and communities are responsible for their own safety. Many bodies of water in Otsego County, including Goodyear, Canadarago, Arnold and Gilbert lakes, are at risk. HABs pose serious health risks to people and pets. Residents should report strongly-colored water or floating mats of scum to the DEC and the Otsego County Health Department. They should not boat, fish, swim or wade in or near affected areas of water. Even with private water treatment systems, families should not drink or cook with surface water.

HABs in Otsego County are a symptom of a severe ecological imbalance in bodies of water. These imbalances cannot be resolved in the short term. It is well established that they are caused by a complex interaction of larger climatic shifts and nutrient-rich runoff from agricultural, landscaping and construction practices. Any long-term solution will require a critical examination of environmentally harmful activities in the larger Upper Susquehanna watershed and vigorous action by communities, organizations and governments.

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