

## Algae Bloom on Farm Island Lake

*Reported by Cheryl McDonough, FILIA Treasurer, on October 2022*

“The algae bloom is very typical in early fall, but this fall (year 2022) it was heavier and more widespread than usual. Algae issues on other lakes were discussed at an ACLARA (Aitkin County Lakes and Rivers Association) meeting. A DNR guest speaker noted that with the drought and low water levels last year, many aquatic plants died off. Now that the water has been back to normal levels, the decay is fertilizer/phosphorus added to the water. Also, phosphorus does settle to the lake's bottom.

Most folks I know swim off their boat, away from where the algae is located, but that may be more difficult because it is more prevalent. See additional information from the MNPCA (MN Pollution Control Agency).

**Blue-green algae occur naturally in all Minnesota lakes.** Swimming in lakes with good water quality and relatively clear water will reduce your exposure to harmful algae. Swimming on the upwind side or middle of a lake can reduce exposure to blooms, which often occur on a downwind shore or in an isolated area (small bay).

**When is it safe to swim? When in doubt, stay out.** You can't tell if a blue-green algal bloom is toxic just by looking at it. People and animals should avoid contact with water that contains blue-green algae. Toxins can persist in the water after a bloom; watch for signs of recent blooms, such as green scum on the shoreline. In some instances, toxins are in the water before a bloom reaches its peak. If you or your pet go into water where there may be a bloom, rinse off with fresh water immediately afterwards.

Which lakes are safe for swimming? **Minnesota does not have a list of “safe” lakes for recreation.** If a lake-wide bloom is occurring, keep out of the lake until conditions have improved.

At this time, I have not heard of anyone getting ill due to the algae bloom.”