

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2019

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Crackrock Pond in Foxboro Found Clean Enough to Swim in, but Who Would Dare to?

Volunteers with the Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA), a local environmental non-profit, have been monitoring water quality in Crackrock Pond, located in Foxborough near the Lane Property on North St. for over 20 years. The Pond is in the headwaters of the Neponset River which gets its start in the Neponset Reservoir. In 2018, the average *E.coli* concentrations in Crackrock Pond were less than half of the level determined to be safe for swimming, meaning the pond was cleaner than some Boston beaches last year. But, take one glance at the neon green blooms that cover the pond every summer, and you'll likely have second thoughts about taking a dip.



Crackrock Pond in the summer of 2018

“Excessive amounts of phosphorus, a key fertilizer for plants, is driving the impressive blooms, and foul smells coming from Crackrock Pond,” says Chris Hirsch, NepRWA environmental scientist. According to the Association’s recently published report, on the water quality of Crackrock Pond, phosphorus levels were almost ten times the level EPA considers healthy for ponds. Hirsch claimed, “The pond’s high phosphorus level is not only causing ugly blooms, but it’s also depleting the supply of oxygen in the water, which aquatic animals depend on to breathe.”

The high concentration of phosphorus in Crackrock Pond is likely, in part, the legacy of past discharges upstream in the Neponset Reservoir. However, Ian Cooke, the Association’s Executive Director observed “our results also suggest that stormwater runoff from the nearby landscape is contributing to the

problem.” Major sources of phosphorus in the landscape include lawn and agricultural fertilizer, yard waste, and erosion from exposed soils. Cooke added “something will need to be done to remove or sequester the phosphorus that is cycling within the pond, but preventing new stormwater inputs of phosphorus is a major piece of the restoration puzzle. Preventing stormwater pollution is critical to protecting other ponds and waterways in Foxborough from a similar fate.”

The Town of Foxborough has been working with the Association and neighboring communities through the Neponset Stormwater Partnership to comply with new requirements from EPA to reduce polluted stormwater runoff. Under the new requirements, which apply throughout eastern Massachusetts, the Town must implement numerous pollution reduction measures, such as more frequent street sweeping, new rules for land developers, and checking for and eliminating sewer and septic leaks. Educating the public about stormwater pollution is another requirement. Chris Gallager, the Foxborough Town Engineer is charged with overseeing compliance efforts, and said “the new permit requirements are a significant new obligation for our small department, but we are making progress and the outcome of our efforts will benefit all residents in Foxboro.”

For the full report on the health of Crackrock Pond, and for more information about how you can help reduce the amount of phosphorus coming off of your property visit the Neponset Stormwater Partnership website, at www.yourcleanwater.org.

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