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For further information contact: Chris Hirsch, Environmental Scientist
Neponset River Watershed Association, Canton, MA 02021
781-575-0354 x 302 | hirsch@neponset.org

Phosphorus Continues to be an Issue in Foxborough's Crack Rock Pond

Crackrock Pond, located near the Lane Property on North St. in Foxborough, is contaminated with excess phosphorus, according to a new water quality report published by the Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA).

Volunteers with NepRWA, a local environmental non-profit, have monitored water quality in Crackrock Pond for over 20 years, as part of NepRWA's Citizen Water Monitoring Network. The Association's recently published report suggests that phosphorus continues to be the main issue plaguing the health of the pond.



“The excess phosphorus is causing harmful algal blooms and is reducing oxygen levels in the pond, which makes it difficult for fish to survive during the summer,” said NepRWA's Environmental Scientist, Chris Hirsch.

According to the recent water quality report, phosphorus levels were ten times higher than the level considered healthy by the EPA. “The town just built a beautiful new deck overlooking Crackrock Pond for residents to enjoy and it's a shame that the pond is in such poor shape. This park could be a great recreational destination if we could get the phosphorus under control,” Hirsch continued.

The report claims that historic industrial pollution accounts for much of the phosphorus affecting Crackrock Pond. Phosphorus is also introduced from the surrounding landscape through stormwater runoff, when rain washes lawn and agricultural fertilizer, yard waste, and erosion from exposed soils into the river. Ian Cooke, the executive director of the Neponset River Watershed Association, remarked, "Something will need to be done to remove the phosphorus that is already in the pond, but preventing new stormwater inputs of phosphorus is also a major piece of the restoration puzzle. Preventing stormwater pollution is critical to protecting other ponds and waterways in Foxborough from a similar fate."

Cooke suggests that "Homeowners should get their soils tested before applying fertilizers to their lawns. It's common for lawns to not actually need extra phosphorus applied to them to stay green and healthy." He continued, "applying phosphorus when it's not needed is a waste of time and money. It's best to know before you go and test your soils first." The University of Massachusetts Amherst Soils Lab can provide soil tests and detailed explanations of the results, for a small fee.

The Town of Foxborough has been working with the Association and neighboring communities through the Neponset Stormwater Partnership to comply with new requirements from the 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.

When asked for comment, the recently hired Town Engineer, Lance DelPriore, said the following "The Town of Foxborough remains deeply committed to improving the quality of stormwater runoff which can have direct impacts on so many ecosystems. In coordination with the Neponset Reservoir Restoration Committee, the Town recently approved installation of a Contech Jellyfish Filter at the upstream boat ramp on Edwards Road. This technology is specifically designed to remove not only phosphorus, but also nitrogen and other known pollutants. The Town was also just recently designated by DCR as a co-owner of the Crackrock Pond Dam and has started discussions with the historic owners as to the needs and opportunities for improvement at this location."

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 from your property visit the Neponset Stormwater Partnership website: www.YourCleanWater.org.

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