

Dane County Exec. Parisi: Kicks off lakes clean up work

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Groundbreaking Work Means Cleaner Lakes Decades Sooner

Today Dane County Executive Joe Parisi kicked off “Suck The Muck”, a \$12 million lakes clean-up project. The initiative will assess and clean up to 33 miles of streams that feed phosphorus directly in the lakes on a daily basis. This work will remove 870,000 pounds of phosphorus, the chief culprit responsible for algae growth, from area waters.

“This effort will mean cleaner lakes for our children and grandchildren,” said Dane County Executive Parisi. “Our lakes are one of the reasons people love living in Dane County. We must continue to improve the health and vitality of our lakes.”

Over the summer, Dane County will continue to assess streams by collecting and analyzing sediment samples from all 33 miles of streams. Sample laboratory results are being evaluated. Also, planning for sediment removal of additional sites is underway. Dane County anticipates identifying and securing services for sediment removal from a second site starting in fall/winter of 2018.

These waterways are feeders of phosphorus into the chain of lakes. Until the muck under the water flowing above is free and clear of pollutants, the streams will continue to release phosphorus, responsible for creating algae, into the lakes. This project will provide a benefit by returning these stream bottoms to the way they were back in 1890, allowing for new fisheries and healthy habitats for wildlife.

Dane County conducted a study to analyze the water quality and phosphorus content of the streams and creeks that feed into Lake Mendota. The findings were stark: if the accrued muck that sits at the bottom of these streams is not removed,

it will take 99 years to see the water quality standards achieved. Technical experts from UW- Madison, DNR and State Hygiene Lab were consulted on the project.

Testing shows the phosphorus concentration in this stream sediment is seven times more potent than what's found on crop fields in the watershed. County staff and farmers have implemented conservation and runoff reduction practices on 90% of those lands in the Dorn Creek area. Nutrient Management Plans from farmlands in the watershed are on average two times better than the state standards for phosphorus runoff.

This data shows what's been done to date has worked at keeping nutrients on the land. The County and its partners are making progress. Studies show that even if all phosphorus and sediment stopped entering streams today - all runoff from farm and cities stops immediately- it would still take 60 years for all the established sediment and phosphorus to be flushed out of the system.

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