LAKE MASSAPOAG
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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LAKE MASSAPOAG IS FACING A CRITICAL CHALLENGE

Lake Massapoag is facing a critical challenge: high phosphorus levels from runoff, septic seepage and lake sediment are fueling toxic cyanobacteria blooms, which threaten public health, wildlife, and enjoyment of the lake.

In 2021, these blooms forced the closure of the entire lake, and in recent years, smaller blooms have repeatedly disrupted swimming and summer activities.

At last year's Town Meeting, voters approved the appropriation of $525,000 for Lake Massapoag weed and bacteria hazard mitigation based on our proposal to the Community Preservation Commission for a High-Dose Alum Treatment. The Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee (LMAC) worked with consultants and town committees, staff and other stakeholders to identify a number of possible solutions to address the high levels of phosphorus already in our lake which feed algae growth and in turn fuel dangerous cyanobacteria. As approved by LMAC and other board and committees, town staff and state agencies, we have a plan to complete an alum treatment in June, before the beach opens, using this funding.

We need to treat the lake with alum now because the phosphorus (P) in sediment has continued to build up in the lake bottom over the past 35 years and the number of septic systems adding P to the lake has doubled. We are developing a watershed management plan to control the septic and fertilizer inputs that are the major sources of excess P. This will take time to implement. We need to control the phosphorus already in the lake until these measures are in place.

Alum, or aluminum sulfate, is a proven and safe method used worldwide to prevent algae blooms. When added to the water, it forms a solid layer on the lake bottom that binds phosphorus in the sediment, preventing its release into the water. This cuts off the main nutrient source for cyanobacteria, lowering the risk of harmful blooms for five to ten years.

The treatment will target the deepest parts of the lake—areas more than 21 feet deep—over a six-day period between June 2 and June 18, 2025. During treatment, the boat launch will be closed and Veterans Memorial Beach will be closed to swimming, but the rest of the lake will remain open. We will post signage asking everyone to avoid the marked treatment area and boats in operation for safety.

Alum is safe for people and pets at the levels used. Shortly after treatment, aluminum concentrations will be well below secondary drinking water standards, which people bathe and shower in as well as drink, and similar to what's found in common foods and even infant formula.

While alum treatment is a vital first step, it's not the only solution. The committee is also developing a long-term watershed plan to reduce phosphorus entering the lake from sources like stormwater runoff, septic systems, and fertilizers. Everyone can help by limiting fertilizer use, maintaining septic systems, picking up pet waste, and keeping debris out of the lake.

Please join us at our Community Meeting on May 29, 7 pm at the Sharon Community Center—or on Zoom—to learn more and share your ideas. Together, we can protect Lake Massapoag for future generations.