State officials to use floating platform to monitor White Lake water quality

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By: WECT Staff
CONNECT

Officials with the North Carolina Division of Water Resources have been granted a permit to use a floating platform to monitor the water quality of White Lake. (Source: Town of White Lake)

WHITE LAKE, NC (WECT) -

Officials with the North Carolina Division of Water Resources have been granted a permit to use a floating platform to monitor the water quality of White Lake, according to a news release from a town spokesperson.

The announcement comes weeks after thousands of fish washed up dead along White Lakes's shoreline after contractors began an alum treatment regiment to combat ongoing algal blooms in the lake.

State water officials temporarily ordered the halt of the alum treatment to determine if it caused the fish kill, but later concluded that the algae and elevated pH levels likely killed the fish. The alum treatment was allowed to resume and be completed.

The specialized monitoring platform, which is about the size of a small raft, will continuously check the lake water for levels of dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, conductivity, and abundance of algae and cyanobacteria.

The platform is expected to be installed Wednesday, May 30 and will be used until the end of September.

“We welcome this additional source of information,” said Mayor Goldston Womble. “The state and the Town have the same goals: we want to understand, then resolve, the issues with the ecosystem that are leading to the algal blooms in our lake.”

According to officials, White Lake is a natural, spring and rainwater-fed lake that is approximately 1,200 acres large. The lake lacks buffering to protect it from the impacts of nutrient runoff which has fed algal blooms in recent years.

Town officials say an algal bloom was already underway by the time contractors were applying the alum treatment to the lake prior to the fish kill.

"The alum treatment has been a success. There has not been any additional fish mortality, pH levels have dropped, and water clarity has greatly improved," said Mike McGill, spokesperson for the town of White Lake.

"The Town is also continuing its partnerships with scientists and environmental leaders to find both short and long-term solutions to the situation," McGill said.

White Lake is working with the Bald Head Island Conservancy to understand the causes of the algae blooms and to assess the lake's groundwater resource.

The work includes developing a hydrologic model of groundwater flows, identifying nutrient sources, crafting simulations to enable forecasting in groundwater changes, and evaluating water quality dynamics, including daily and seasonal fluctuations.