

Mercury testing for Lake Altoona

From the information I have seen, no one has tested Lake Altoona for mercury. The main concern appears to be with the unappealing green color during the dog days of summer. This is caused by algae. Phosphates are a contributing factor to the algae bloom. The monthly samples I send to the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene are analyzed for total phosphates and well as chlorophyll (which quantifies the algae itself).

Many people feel (me included) that the fishery aspect is at least as important as the aesthetics of the lake color. The two most important questions are:

1. Are the fish safe to eat?
2. Is acid-rain a problem affecting fish reproduction in our lake?

Last year, I took a sample and sent it to Northern Lakes Services in Crandon, Wisconsin for mercury analysis. Northern Lakes Service is a certified test lab for mercury testing. I am pleased to report that the results of the test were "non-detect", with a limit of detection of 0.02 parts per billion. In plain English, this means that the mercury concentration is LESS THAN 0.02 ppb. (You can never say it is zero because of limitations in the test procedure).

Regarding acid rain: Since I have been testing, the pH of the lake water has been greater than 7.0 at least 97% of the time. This is also true from the older records that were generated by others. The bottom line is that acid rain does not currently pose a problem in Lake Altoona