

York Water District outlines algae solutions in depth

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YORK, Maine — None spoke during a public hearing, but a small group of residents living near Chases Pond turned out Monday night to hear the York Water District's plan to get rid of algae in the town's drinking water.

The nuisance algae presents no health hazard, but in large quantities known as "blooms," customers have complained of a metallic taste and odor to the water, according to York Water District Superintendent Don Neumann.

The last bloom was in August 2011. From November 2013 until January, algae was found in moderately high numbers in Chases Pond, the town's water source, according to Water Treatment Plant Manager Ryan Lynch.

In the short term, the district wants to add a copper-based algaecide to the pond on a limited, as-needed basis, according to Neumann.

The long-term solution is the installation of a water circulation system in 14 acres of the pond near the dam off of Chases Pond Road. The system is expected to be designed and installed within two years, according to Neumann.

The water district notified abutters of the plans by sending letters to an estimated 80 homeowners who live within a one-mile radius of the pond. Resource Protection Officer Gary Stevens and Lynch have also been talking to neighbors, Neumann told the estimated dozen people in attendance.

"Their biggest concern is noise," Neumann said, referring to the compressor that would run the air circulation system. "Our intent is to make that as quiet as possible."

The compressor would be installed in the existing brick screen house next to Chases Pond Road where debris such as sticks are filtered out before the water goes to the treatment plant, according to information given on Monday. The system could also be installed in sound-proofed equipment outside, district officials said.

Tubes would run from the compressor along the bottom of the pond, releasing air into the water to add oxygen, which helps remove nutrients upon which the algae feed. The circulation system itself would be underwater, Neumann said.

There would be no "Las Vegas water fountains," he said.

Residents interviewed after the hearing indicated they were satisfied with what they heard.

"They've been good neighbors," said Kathleen Loane of Chases Pond Road.

David Loane said his concern was noise, and the water district said it wouldn't be a problem.

Anne and Nick Cowenhoven of Apgar Lane said they live far enough away not to have a concern about noise, but were wondering about the potential for water discharge reaching their property. After listening to what was said Monday, they felt it wouldn't be a problem, they said.

"I just came for the information," said John Osgood of Scituate Road.

The algae, called *Uroglena aericana*, was first noticed under the ice in February 2010, according to Neumann. The algae grows with sunlight and doesn't mind the cold, he said. That February, cold temperatures, little snow and sunshine caused a growth of algal numbers to the point that it was classified as a bloom.

The algae returned in August 2011. In 2012, numbers were comparatively low, and in November, the nuisance returned, but with no further complaints of a bad odor or taste, according to Neumann.

The water district in the past has added copper to the drinking water, a process that now requires a DEP permit.

The DEP allows up to 1.3 milligrams of copper per liter, according to Lynch. The water district would add, at its highest dose, 0.1 milligram per liter, Lynch said. This is less than what the average person gets from drinking water through copper pipes, he said.

The district's filtration system removes metals from the water, but not copper, according to Lynch.

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