

# Healthy lake pilot program launched



Gerry Munley, left, former science chair at New Trier High School and a member of Lake County Lake Lovers, guides tech team members Debbie Mumm, center, and Sandy Likus on the process of assessing water quality in preparation for the launch of the pilot lake monitoring program. (Courtesy of Mary Conley Eggert)





Gerry Munley brings the monitoring equipment to the Loch Lomond beach for a final test prior to the launch of the Lake County Lake Lover 2025 Pilot Monitoring Program. (Courtesy of Mary Conley Eggert)

A volunteer group's passion enters a new phase this weekend with the start of a pilot program to monitor and hopefully improve conditions at 12 lakes throughout Lake County.

The initiative by Lake County Lake Lovers involves providing state-of-the-art monitoring equipment and expertise to gather data on lake health twice a month through October.

Key water quality indicators such as the concentration of phosphorous, dissolved oxygen, algae growth and others will be measured and compared over time on each lake in a collaboration between trained citizen scientists and more than two dozen lake volunteers.

The program is a significant step in equipping local communities with information and tools to make informed restoration decisions, said Becky Sawle, a Libertyville resident and cochair of Lake County Lake Lovers.

The organization is a working group of Global Water Works, a nonprofit dedicated to connecting communities with experts, technology and best practices to provide water solutions.

In Lake County, the working group was launched in 2022 and has grown from about a dozen to 160 members.

According to Lake Lovers, more than 70% of Lake County's 173 lakes are classified as impaired. Healthy lakes mitigate flooding and algae blooms, low oxygen levels and other factors can affect water quality and have an affect on swimming or fishing, for example.

"You can't swim in a lake with algae blooms and we have regular occurrences of those," said Mary Conley Eggert, founder of Global Water Works and host for Lake County Lake Lovers. "They put up signs."

Lake Lovers put out the call for participants earlier this year and received 12 applications. Among the conditions was that information would be shared publicly and that the participants have or are working on a management plan.

By tracking the indicators and making the data publicly available lake managers and stakeholders can get a clearer understanding of trends, challenges and the effectiveness of different efforts, according to Lake Lovers.

"By sharing findings across participating lakes we can accelerate learning and replicate successful strategies throughout the county," Sawle said. "What's not to like about a healthy lake? Everybody gets something from it," she added.

The seven-month pilot starts Saturday at Lake Leopold in the Prairie Crossing community in Grayslake and continues Sunday at Loch Lomond and St. Mary's lake in Mundelein.

Instruments, gifted by water technology company Xylem Inc., will empower the lake stewards to gain insights into lake health, track the effectiveness of restoration efforts and promote informed decision making, according to Lake Lovers.

"The most important thing right now is to have information of what's going on in your lake and help develop a plan," said Gerry Munley, a former high school chemistry teacher who submitted Loch Lomond to the pilot program.