

Algae Bloom Adds To Troubles at Lake Las Vegas

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Author: Henry Brean
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It seems even Mother Nature has it in for Lake Las Vegas.

After a run of bad news about business closures at the bankrupt development, now comes word of an algae bloom in its signature water attraction.

Lake Las Vegas spokeswoman Anita-Marie Laurie confirmed on Friday that about 1,000 fish have died as a result of a golden algae outbreak in the 340-acre man-made lake.

Steve Weber, a lake and river ecologist who works as a consultant for Lake Las Vegas, said the algae is only toxic to fish and amphibians that use gills to breathe. It poses no danger to humans, dogs, birds, amphibious insects or even "a cow that might drink out of the lake," he said.

This is the first time Lake Las Vegas has been hit with golden algae, which is known by the scientific name *Prymnesium parvum*.

Weber said the bloom is naturally occurring and might have already peaked.

There is no way to treat for it in a lake of this size, so the algae will be left to run its course. He said it should disappear on its own in a few weeks.

Laurie said the first dead fish were spotted in the water last week and notices about the bloom were sent out Friday to homeowners in the 3,600-acre master-planned community at the Henderson's northeastern edge.

The death of about 1,000 fish might be alarming to some people, Weber said, but the die-off is fairly insignificant in a lake that probably contains "hundreds of thousands of fish."

He added that most of the fish that have died so far are common carp.

It's impossible to pinpoint what caused the bloom, Weber said, but it is not the result of a lapse in maintenance. He said there has been no change in the upkeep of the lake as a result of the July 2008 bankruptcy filing by the Atalon Group, owner of the development.

But there have been plenty of other changes, few of them positive for the development's homeowners and investors.

Last year, two of the resort's three championship golf courses closed.

On Feb. 8, the 349-room Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas announced it would shut down on May 2. A week later, Casino MonteLago, Lake Las Vegas' only gaming establishment, said it was shutting down March 14.

If there's good news to be found in this algae bloom, it's that this particular microscopic organism doesn't turn the water green like other types do, Weber said.

"The water just looks a little darker than usual," Weber said. "I just flew over it, and from the air it looked beautiful."