

NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE: August 27th, 2018
Contact: Nick Voss, VLAWMO Education & Outreach Coordinator
651-204-6070



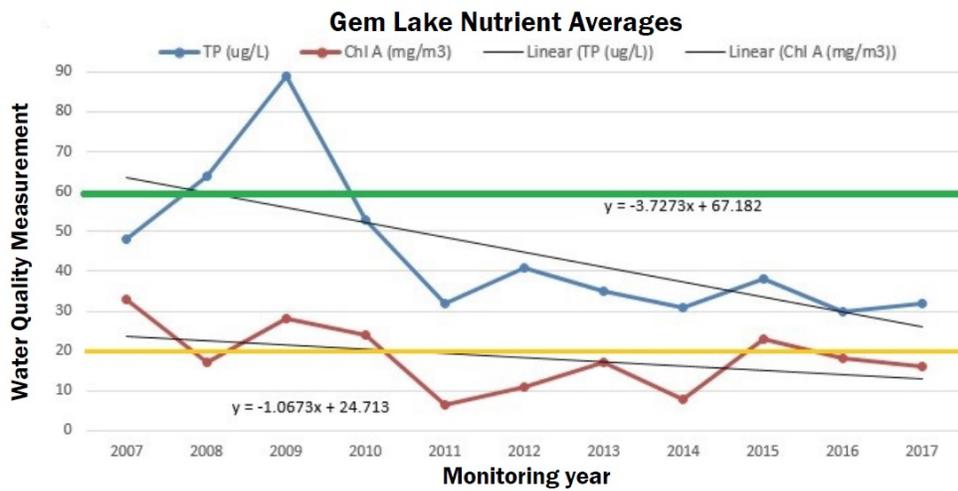
Gem Lake De-Listed from State Impaired List

2018 brought us a local success story in water resources. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has de-listed Gem Lake from the State Impaired Waters list. VLAWMO staff have been monitoring the lake's water quality bi-monthly from May to September since 1997, and it was officially declared impaired in 2010 for being high in nutrients such as phosphorus.

One of the problem areas for Gem Lake has been a drainage ditch on the East side of Hwy 61 (pictured next page). The ditch was frequently mowed down to the bottom, and it's grading would quickly usher water through it and into Gem Lake. With the ditch in this condition, stormwater from the highway and nearby parking lots rushed sediment, salt, and other contaminants such as automotive fluids into Gem Lake. After mowing, grass clippings left in the ditch would also wash into the lake, providing extra nutrients similar to how a person gets sick by eating too much ice cream.

While VLAWMO works to improve water quality within the watershed, it occasionally partners with larger entities that overlap with the watershed. In 2015 MNDOT regraded the ditch and planted it, letting it act more like a bio-swale. The difference is that while a ditch focuses on moving water quickly across the surface, a swale collects water and moves it slower for infiltration. Because the swale infiltrates into shallow groundwater, less water moves across the surface. Shallow groundwater moves underground in what's known as the water table, and has an added benefit of filtration thanks to rock and soil. Up on the surface, the new vegetation in the swale slows water down. This allows plants to absorb it and for sediment and nutrients to settle there instead of in the lake. The amount of runoff that's generated during a 1" rain event in the area draining to the swale is an estimated 230,500 gallons of runoff. That's about 5,700 bathtubs!

But the story doesn't end here. The greater area surrounding Gem Lake is continually changing, which means water quality efforts need to keep up if Gem Lake is to enjoy its newfound health. Residents and business owners are encouraged to dispose of yard waste through a hauler service or at a compost facility – dumping into ditches is highly discouraged. Raingardens, native plantings, permeable pavers, and water-friendly yard care are also great ways to help support Gem Lake. Resources and tips are available at VLAWMO.org/residents. Water quality is a reflection of what's happening on the landscape, which puts all of us land dwellers on the same team.



More water quality data, maps, and a Gem Lake factsheet can be found here:
<http://www.vlawmo.org/waterbodies/gem-lake/>

A map of State impaired waters and de-listed waters can be found on the MPCA website:
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/impaired-waters-viewer-iwav>

For more information about VLAWMO's projects and programs, visit the website at: [VLAWMO Project Map website](#).
 Contact us at (651) 204-6070).