



NEWS RELEASE

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
South Central Region**
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DATE: July 24, 2014
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SUBJECT: Carp die-off observed in Horicon Marsh-Lake Sinissippi area; possible cause under investigation

HORICON, Wis. – A die-off event involving common carp taking place on Horicon Marsh, Lake Sinissippi and the Rock River between the marsh and the lake is under investigation by Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologists and fish health specialists.

“Reports of dead carp started coming in late last week and through the weekend,” said Laura Stremick-Thompson, DNR fisheries biologist in Horicon.

“Our first thought was low oxygen levels but our measurements show the oxygen levels are fine and so far, it is affecting only common carp. Other species, including northern pike, fathead minnow and bullhead, have not been impacted.”

Biologists have collected samples of dead fish from the state-owned southern end of the marsh and from the Rock River at the Hustisford dam. The samples have been sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service La Crosse Fish Health Center, Michigan State University and the DNR fish health lab to be tested for viruses and bacteria. There are herpes-type viruses that are specific to carp that do not affect other species according to DNR fish health specialist Sue Marcquenski.

“It will be at least seven to 10 days before virology results are available” said Marcquenski. “Our bacteriology tests have already shown that the fish are infected with columnaris and at least one additional species of bacteria. Columnaris bacteria are a common cause of fish mortality in Wisconsin, but not often seen in carp. It is very possible that there is more than one pathogen involved in this fish kill. We have not yet ruled out viruses as a co-infection.

Handling dead fish

Landowners with dead fish on their shorelines are reminded to wear protective gloves if directly handling a carcass. Decay bacteria present in a decomposing fish could cause a harmful reaction in humans if directly contacted or ingested. Collecting dead fish with a shovel or rake is another way to avoid contact. Fish carcasses can be put in a dumpster, composted or buried for disposal.

The following counties are in the South Central Region: Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Green, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Vernon.

The Public Affairs Manager for DNR South Central Region is Bob Manwell, (608) 275-3317

“We are not seeing any large accumulations of dead fish in any one area,” said Stremick-Thompson, “they appear to be scattered through the marsh, the lake and the river between them. If folks are seeing a carp die-off in waters other than Horicon Marsh, Lake Sinissippi and the Rock River between the marsh and the lake, we’d appreciate hearing from them.”

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