



**Community Science Institute**  
Partnering with Communities to Protect Water

# **What's Lurking in the Lake?**

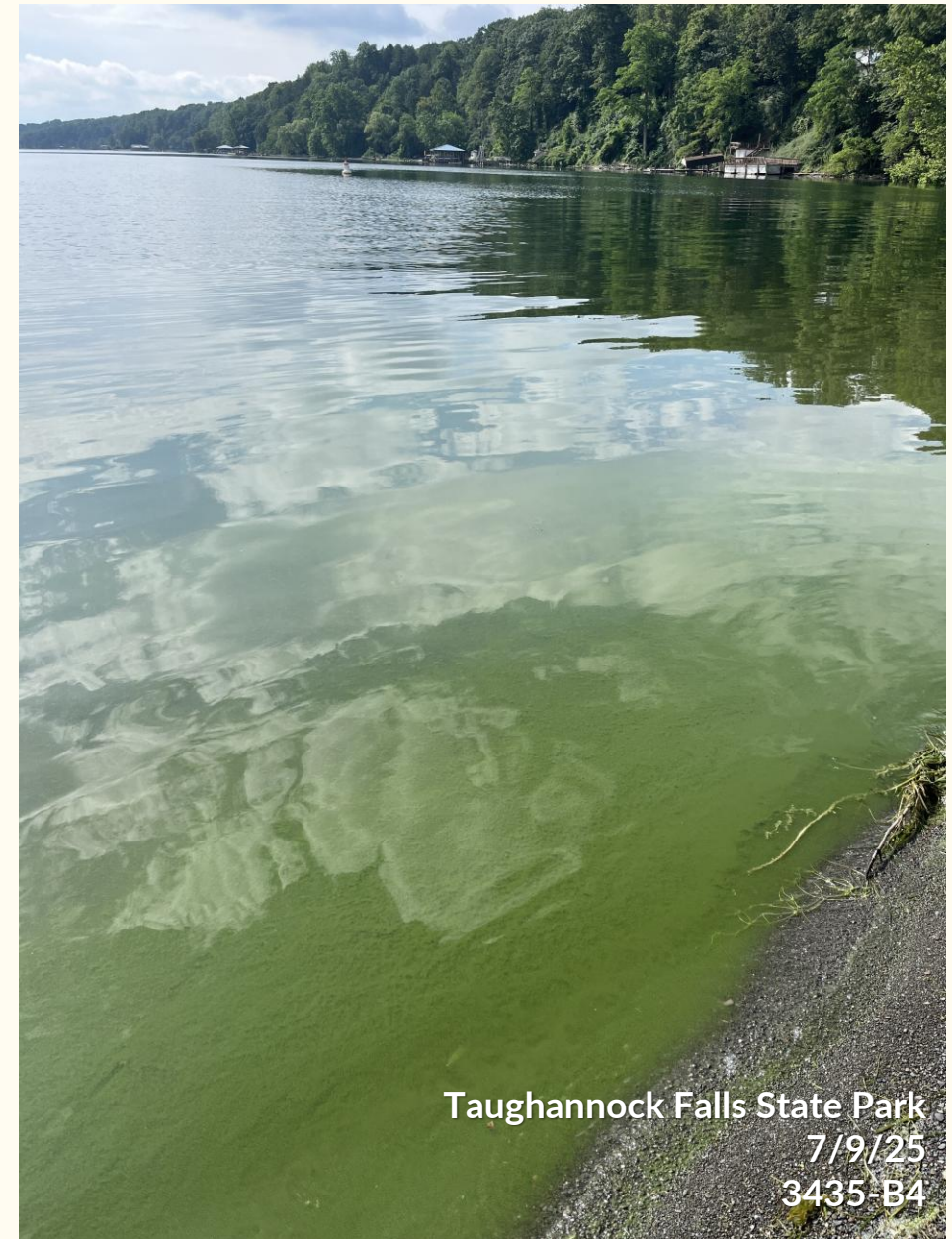
## **Uncovering the Science of Harmful Algal Blooms**

Edith B. Ford Memorial Library  
Ovid, New York  
Wednesday, July 16 @ 5:30 – 7:30 pm

**Alyssa Johnson**  
*Cayuga Lake Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring Program Coordinator,  
Outreach and Programs Coordinator*

# Agenda

- **Community Science Institute**
- “HABs 101”
- HABs and Health
- Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program
- CSI’s HABs Database
- Get Involved/Stay Informed
- Acknowledgements & Q&A



# Community Science Institute



CSI is a 501(c)3 non-profit and NYSDOH-ELAP certified water testing lab

CSI offers three types of programming:

Fee-for-  
Service Water  
Testing

Volunteer  
Water  
Monitoring  
Partnerships

Outreach and  
Education

## CSI's Mission

*To inspire and empower communities to safeguard water resources by cultivating scientific literacy through volunteer water quality monitoring, certified laboratory analyses, and education.*



# CSI Staff



**Grascen Shidemantle**

*Executive Director*



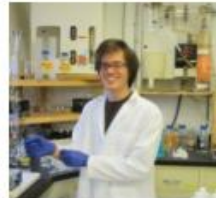
**Alyssa Johnson**

*Outreach and Programs Coordinator  
Cayuga Lake "HABs" Monitoring Program  
Coordinator*



**Katia Appel**

*Office Administrator*



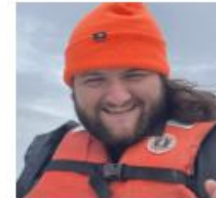
**Noah Mark**

*Technical Laboratory Director*



**Seth Bingham**

*Water Quality Scientist*



**Dan Pascucci**

*Water Quality Scientist*



**Adrianna Hirtler**

*Biomonitoring Program Coordinator*



**Bill George**

*Data Entry Specialist*



**Rama Hoetzlein**

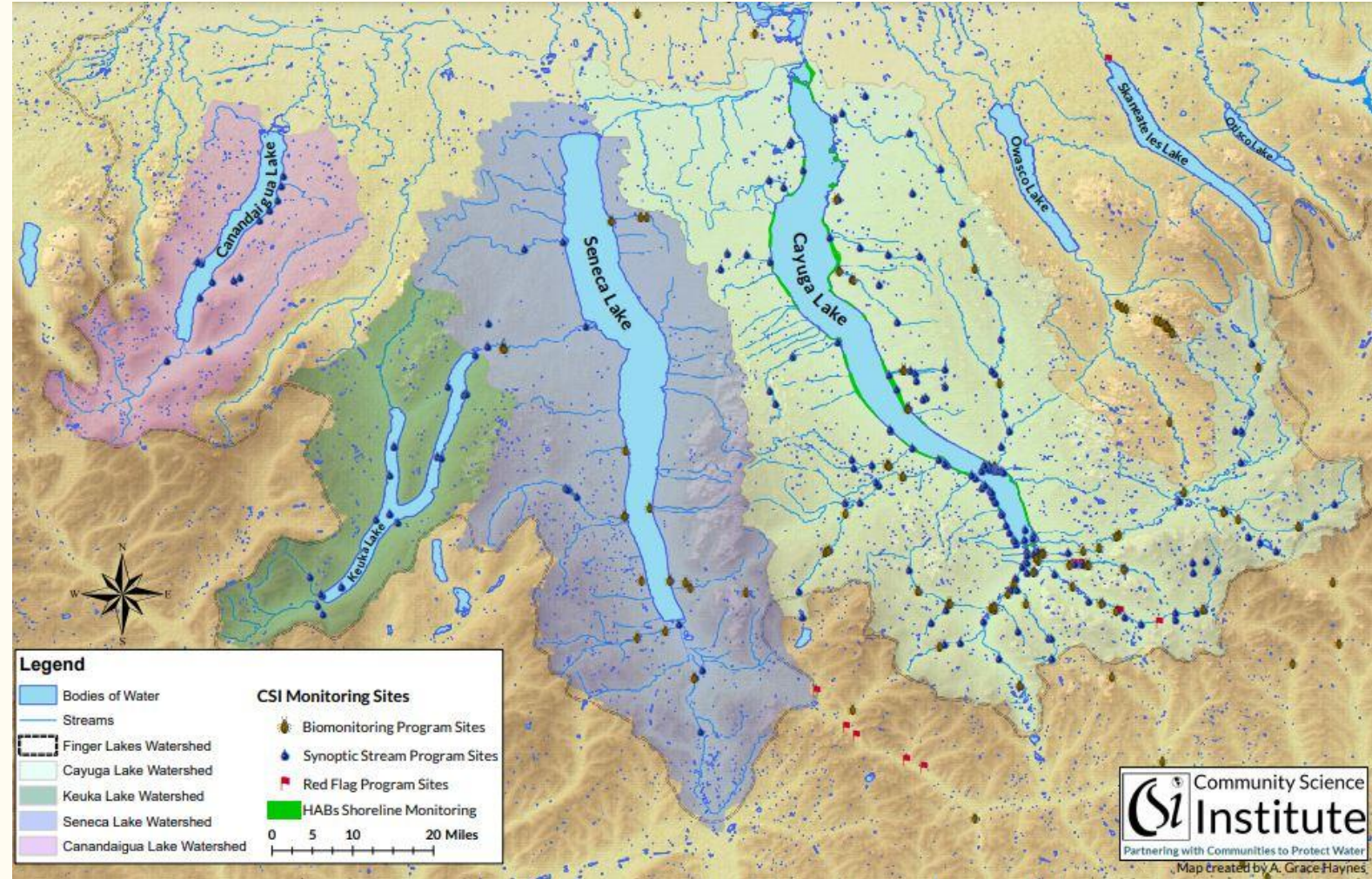
*Database Developer*



# CSI's Water Monitoring Partnerships

1. Synoptic Stream and Lake Monitoring
2. Biomonitoring
3. Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Monitoring

**CSI recruits, trains, and coordinates over 250 volunteers!**

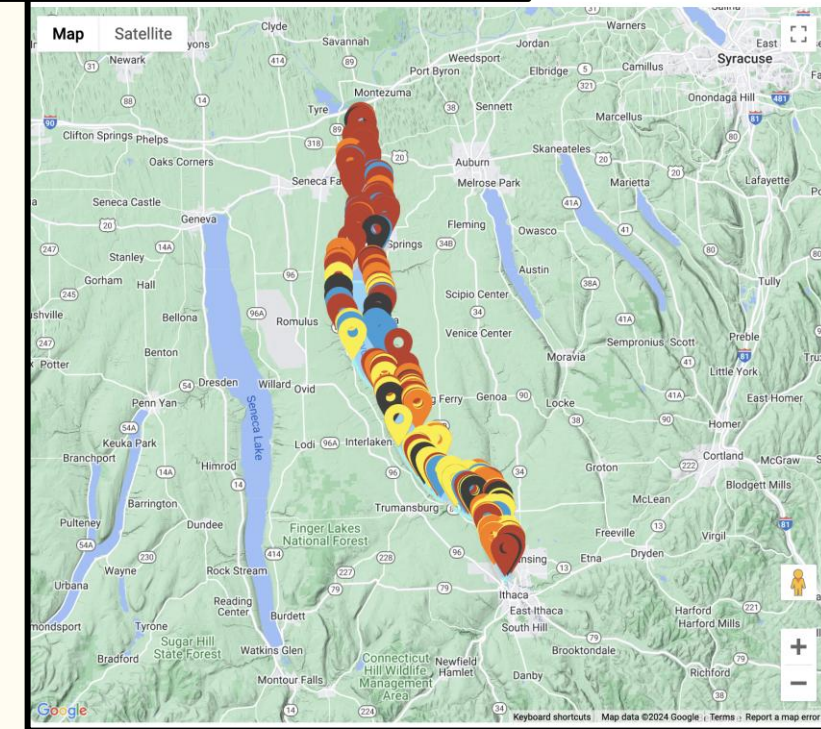
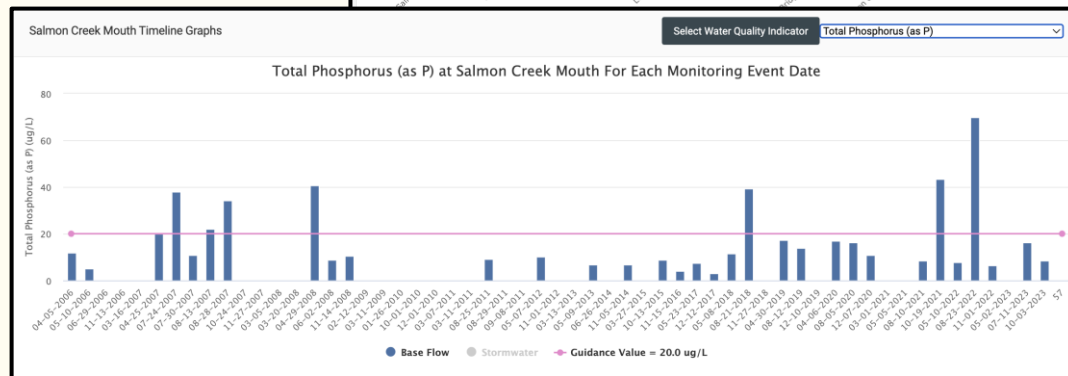
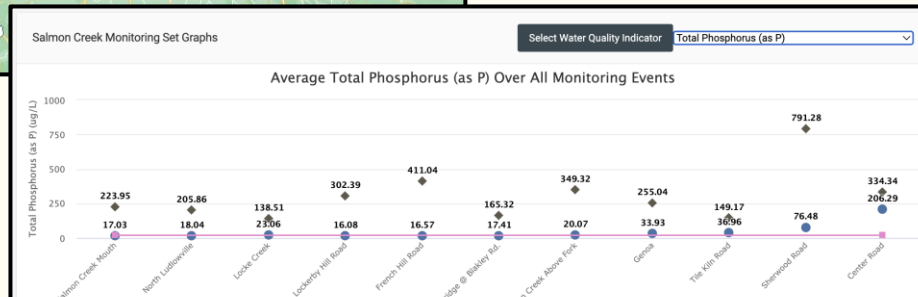
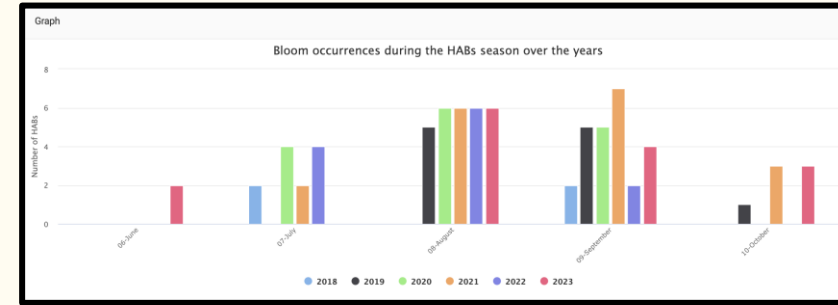
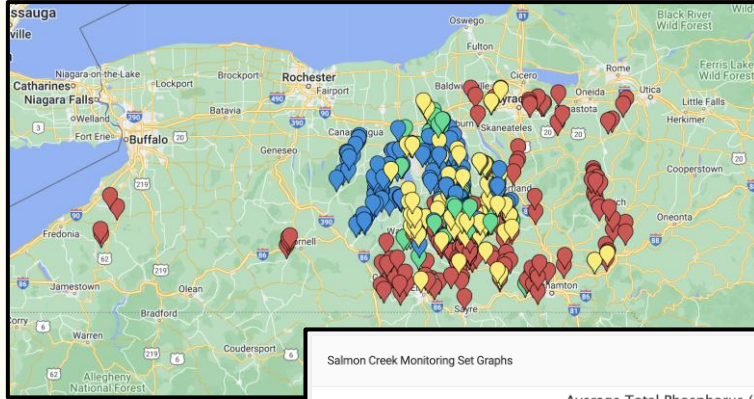




# CSI's Water Quality Database

Harmful Algal  
Blooms

Stream and  
Lake  
Chemistry



# Agenda

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- **“HABs 101”**
- HABs and Health
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Holton Beach Rd, Interlaken  
7/9/25  
3438-B2



# HABs 101: What is a HAB?

## H: Harmful

- Human & Animal Health, Economics, Aesthetics, Ecological

## A: Algal

- Freshwater HABs refer to **cyanobacteria**
- Not true algae

## B: Bloom

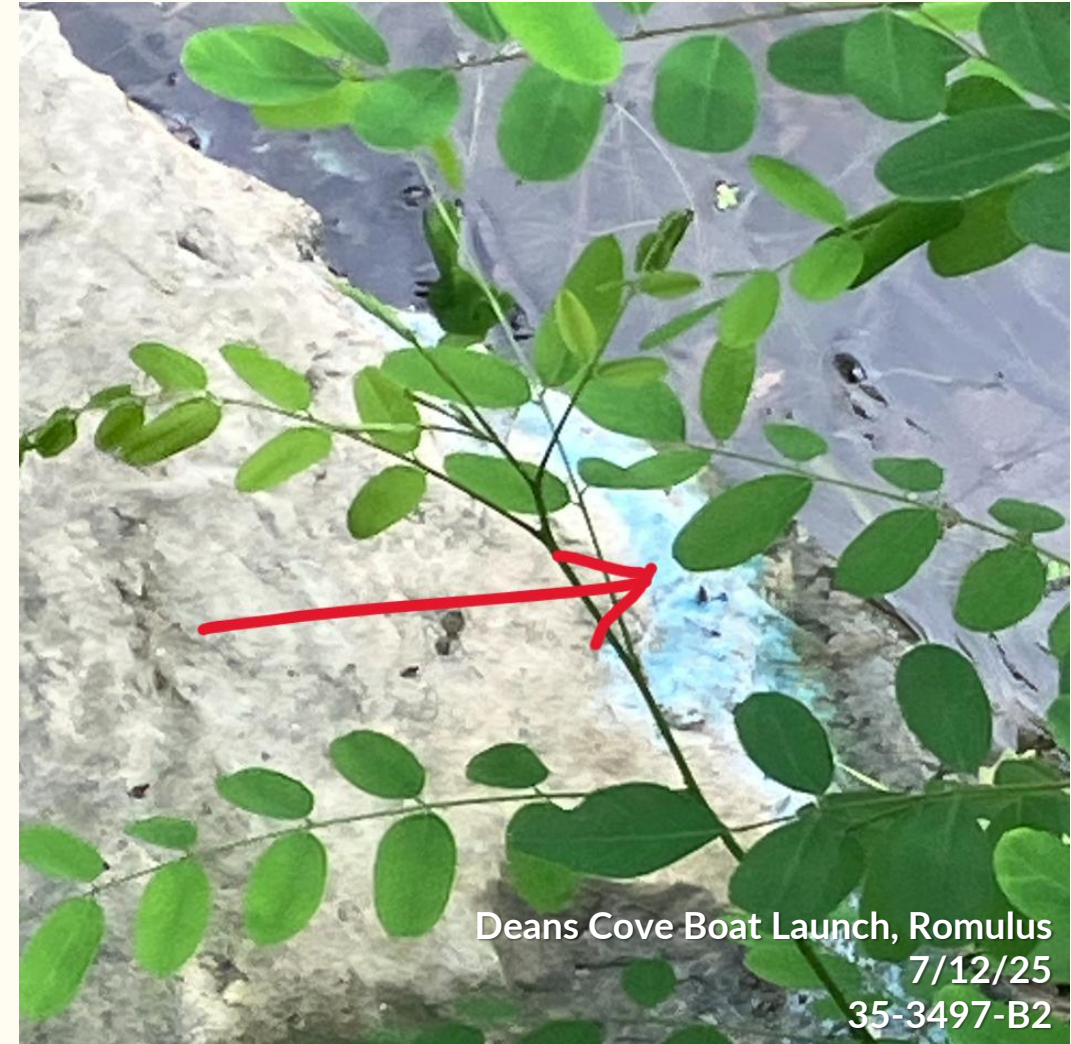
- Proliferations of cells, dense concentrations



# HABs 101: What is a HAB?

Other terms/names used to refer to the HABs we experience on the Finger Lakes:

- Blue-green algae
- Cyano-HABs
- Blooms
- Toxic algal blooms
- Cyanobacterial blooms
- Harmful blue-green algae



Deans Cove Boat Launch, Romulus

7/12/25

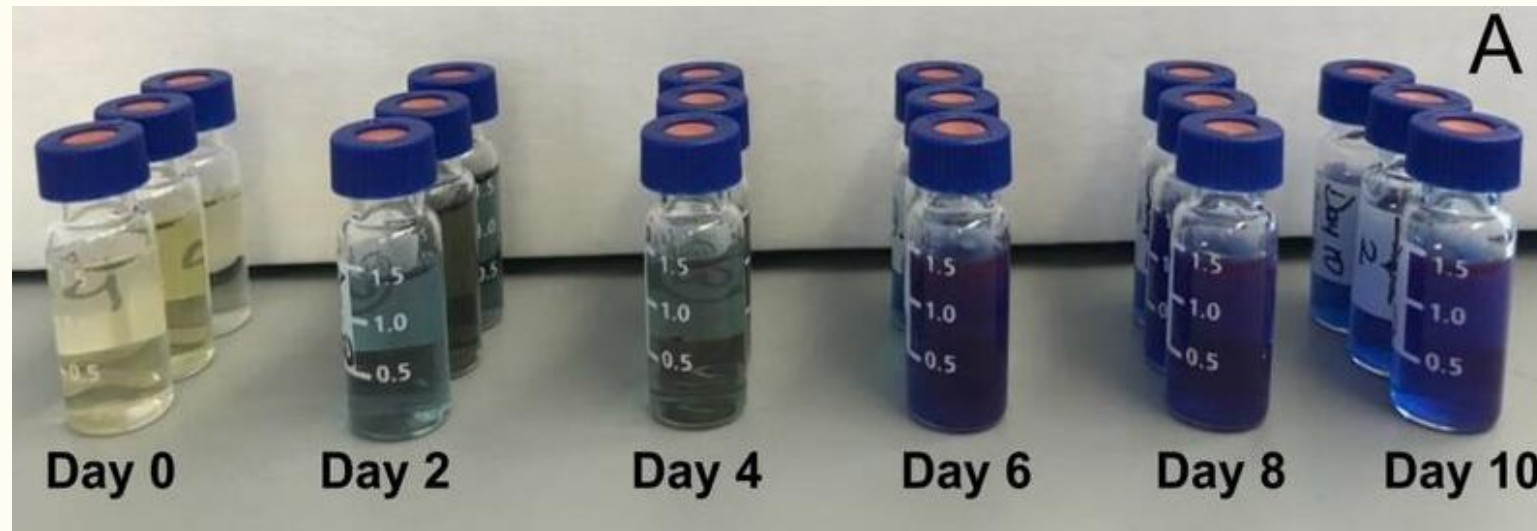
35-3497-B2



# HABs 101: What is a HAB?

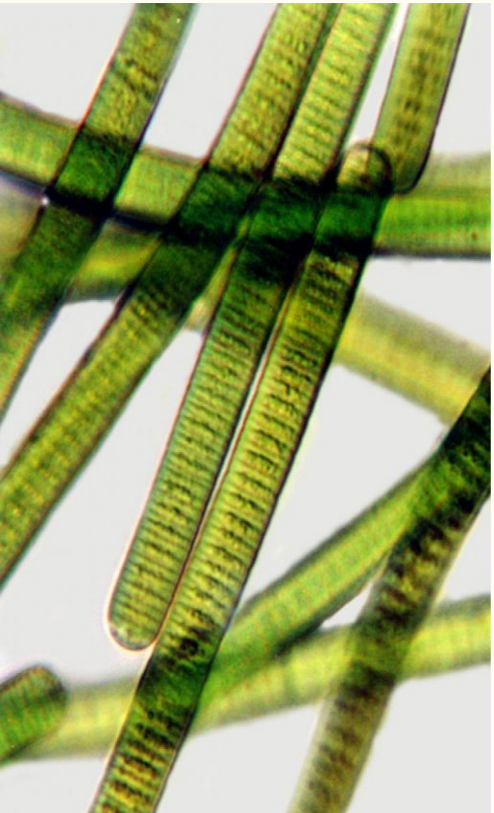
Contains two pigments:

- Chlorophyll
- Phycocyanin

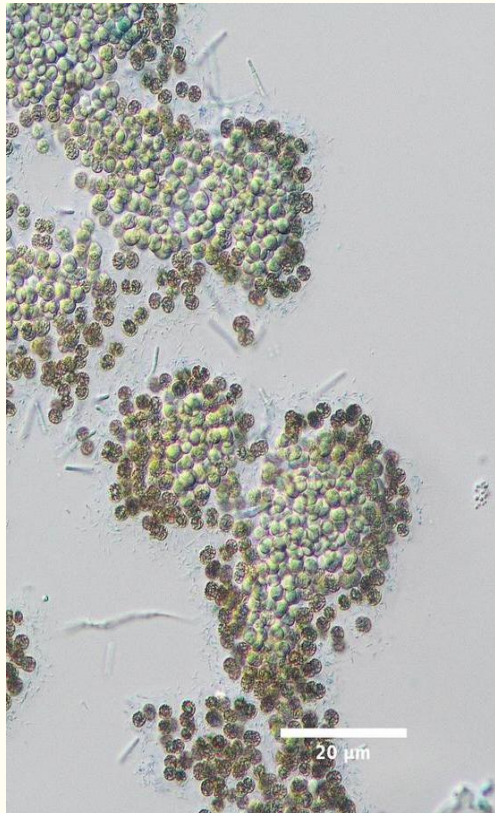




# What are cyanobacteria?



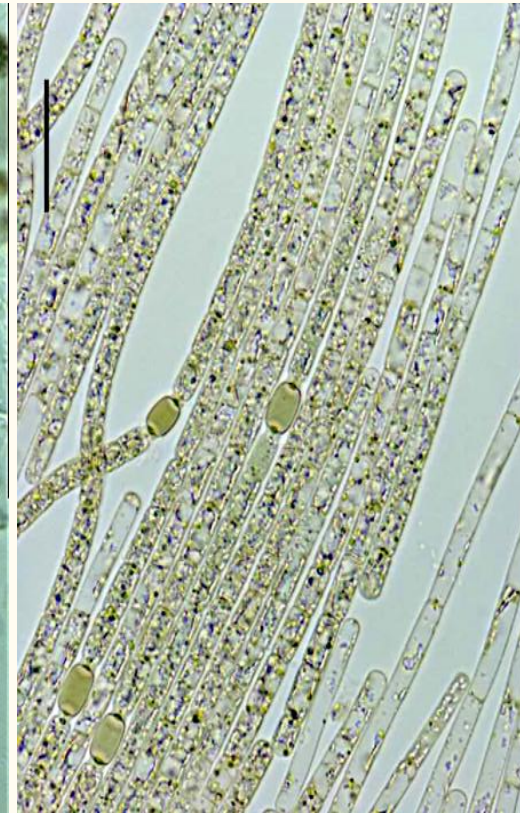
Oscillatoria



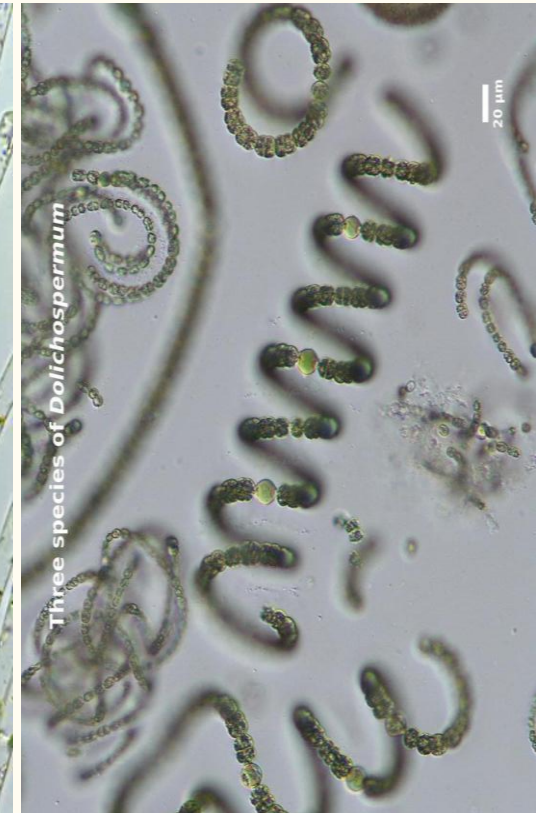
Microcystis



Woronchinia



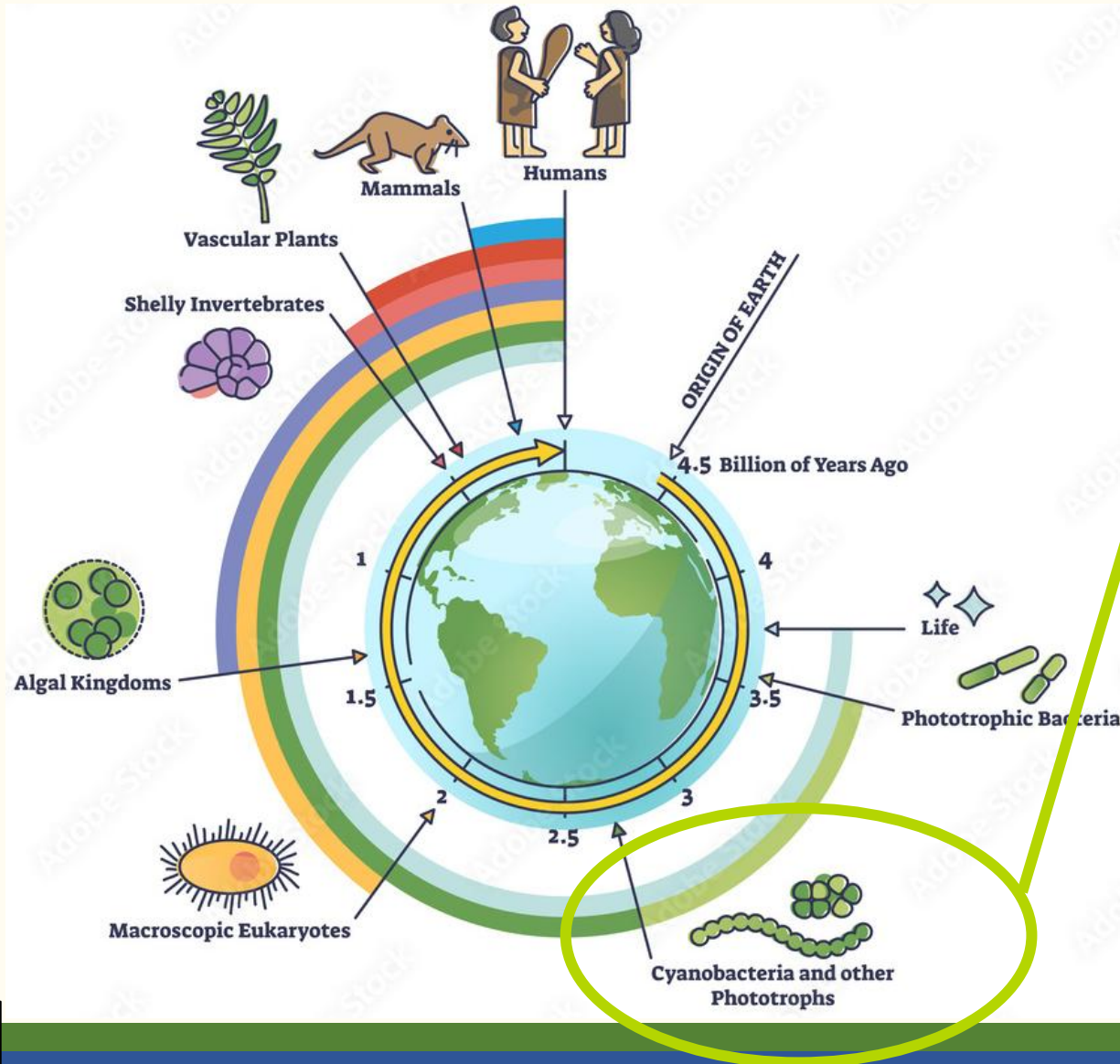
Aphanizomenon



Dolichospermum

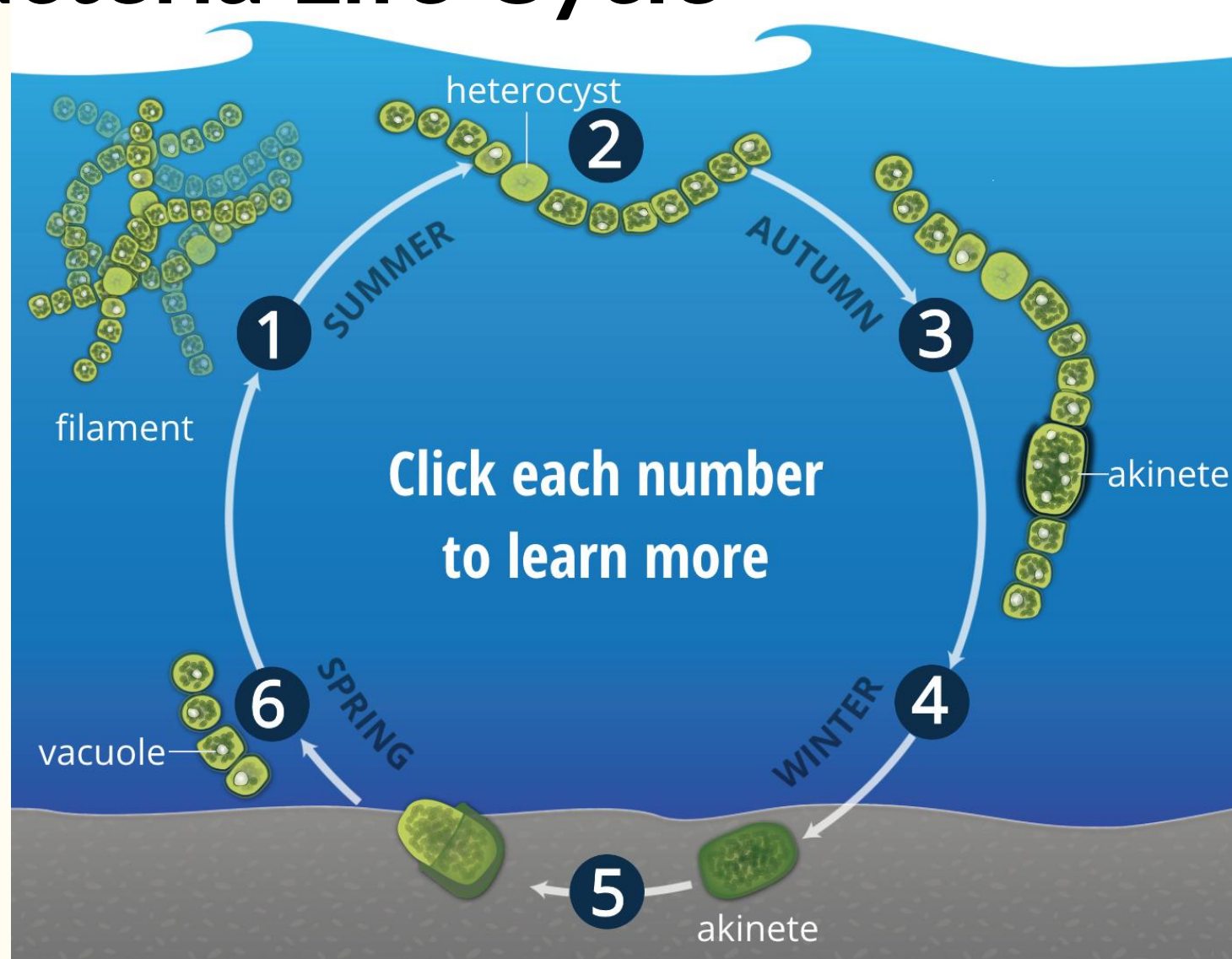


# Evolution of Life on Earth



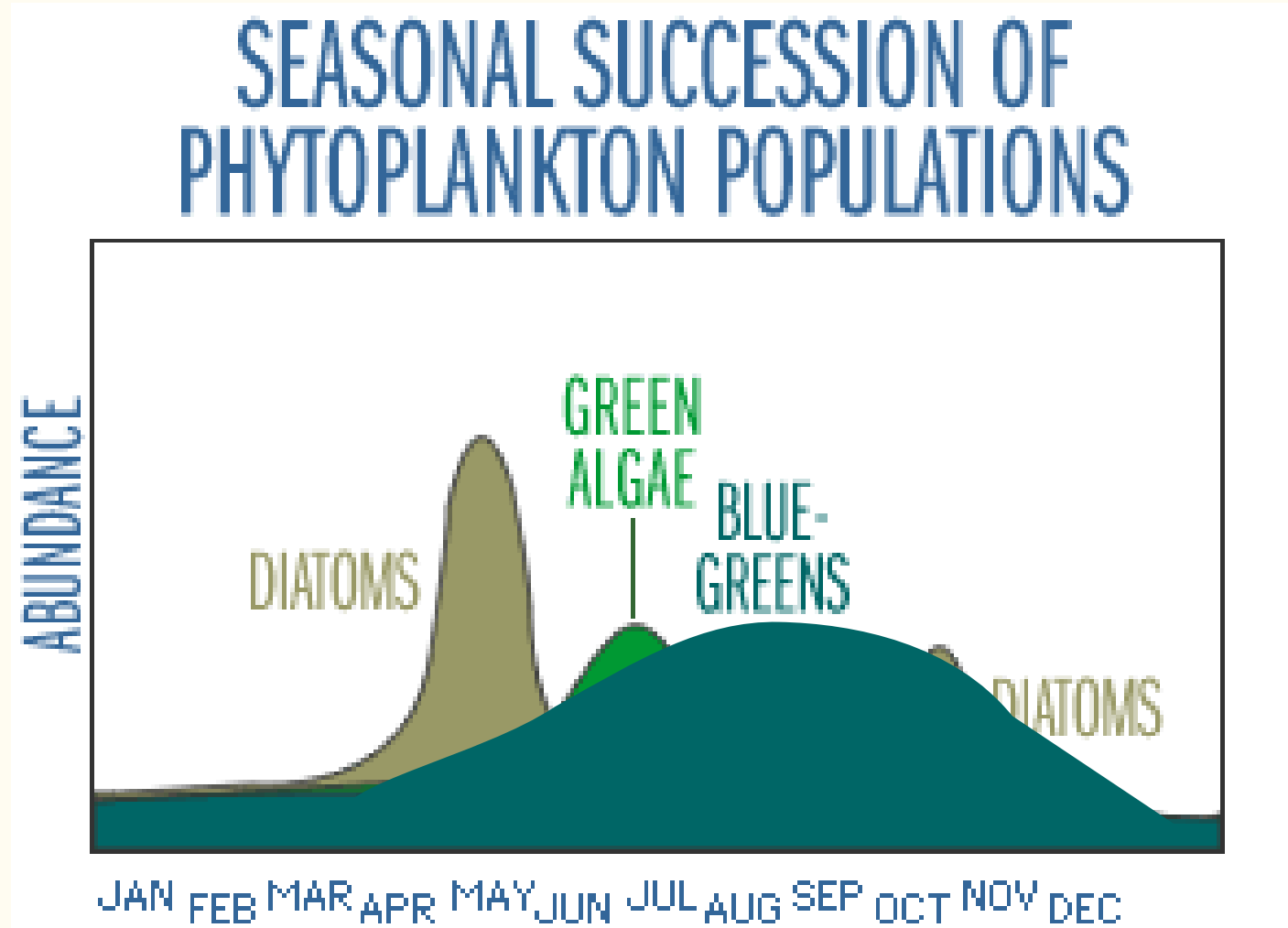
Cyanobacteria are organisms that were hugely important in the history of life on Earth, long before we started thinking about HABs, long before **we** even existed.

# Cyanobacteria Life Cycle

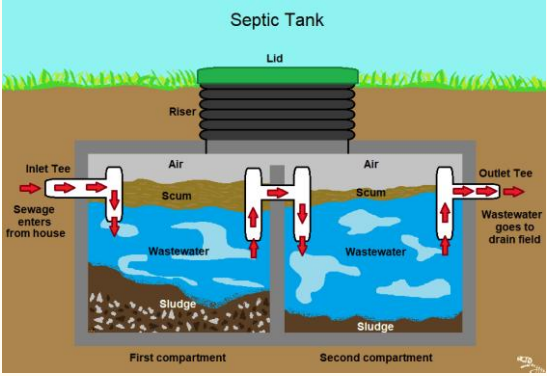




# Conducive Conditions for a **HAB**:



# Conducive Conditions for a HAB:





# HABs Identification

## Rake/Stick/Paddle Test

- Use a sturdy “tool” to lift the plant/scum out of the water.
- Paint-like coating on it, it is likely cyanobacteria.
- If the water does not part when disturbed, it's likely cyanobacteria.
- If the stick lifts out strands of material, which may resemble hair, it's most likely

## Jar Test

- Scoop the suspected HAB into a clear glass jar
- Place in refrigerator for ~1 hour
- HABs rise to the top!

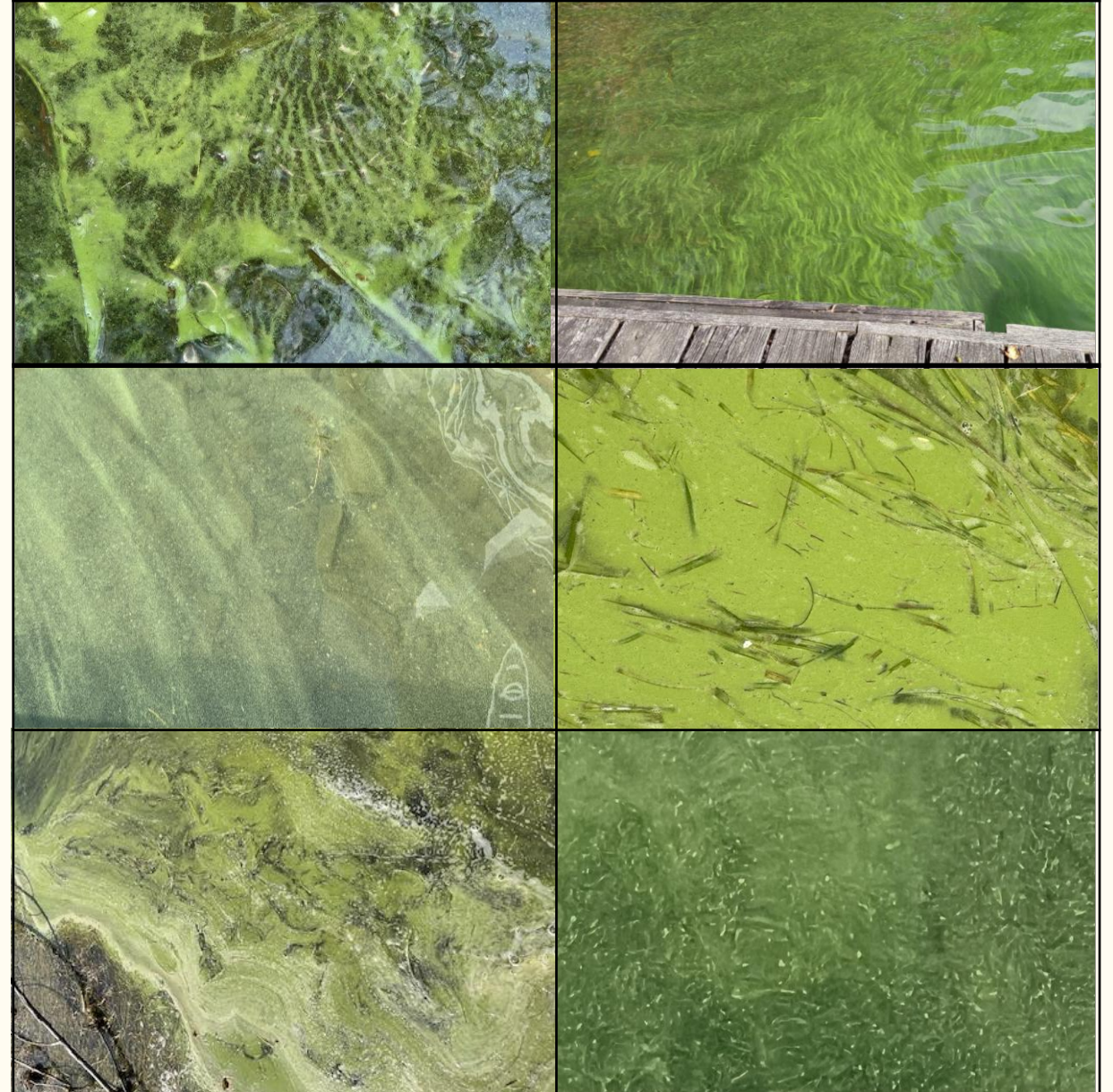




# HABs Identification

## Physical characteristics:

- Floating blooms: surface scum
- Oily sheen
- Spilled or frothy paint paint
- Foamy, marbled
- Speckling/tiny dots
- Variety of colors
- Floating Clumps
- Can create a “scum line” on docks, shore, etc.







Summer 2024 – Cayuga Lake



Summer 2024 – Cayuga Lake







Summer 2024 – Cayuga Lake





Summer 2024 – Cayuga Lake





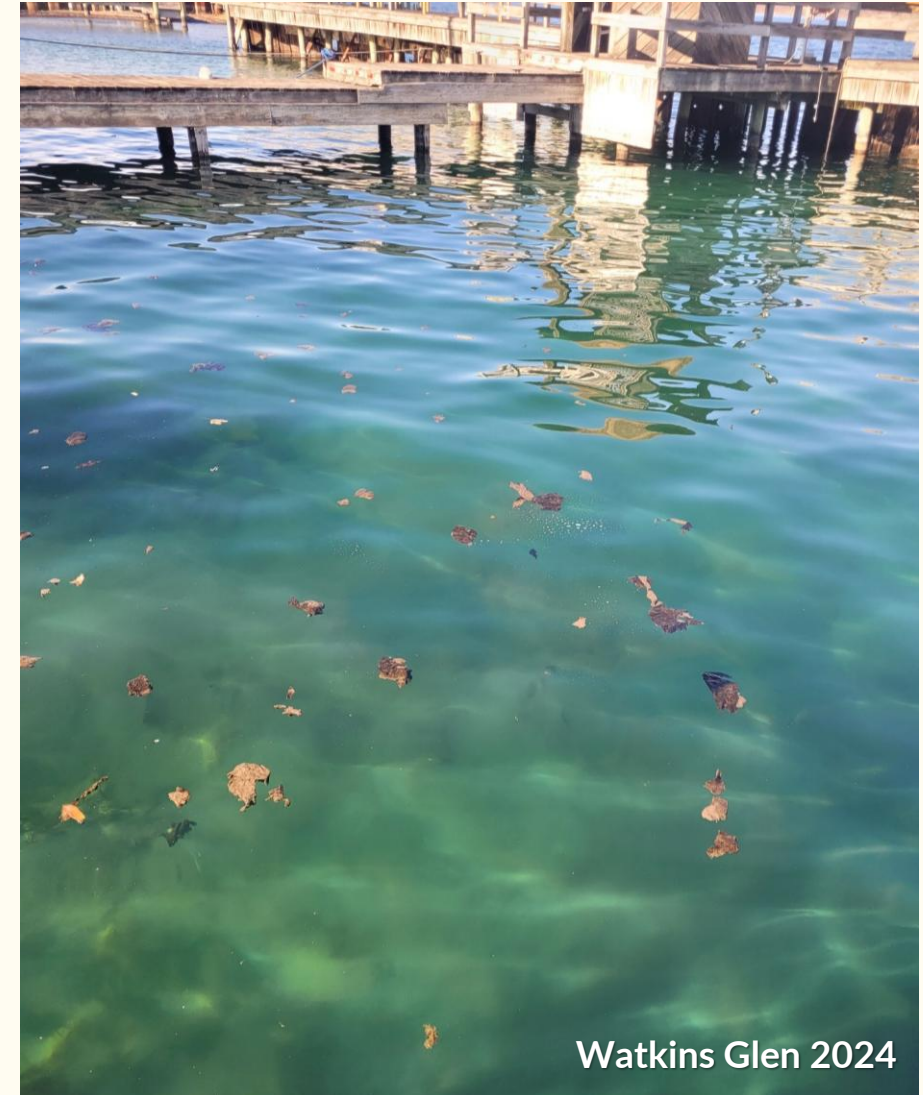
Canandaigua Lake



# HABs Identification: Clumps

Physical characteristics:

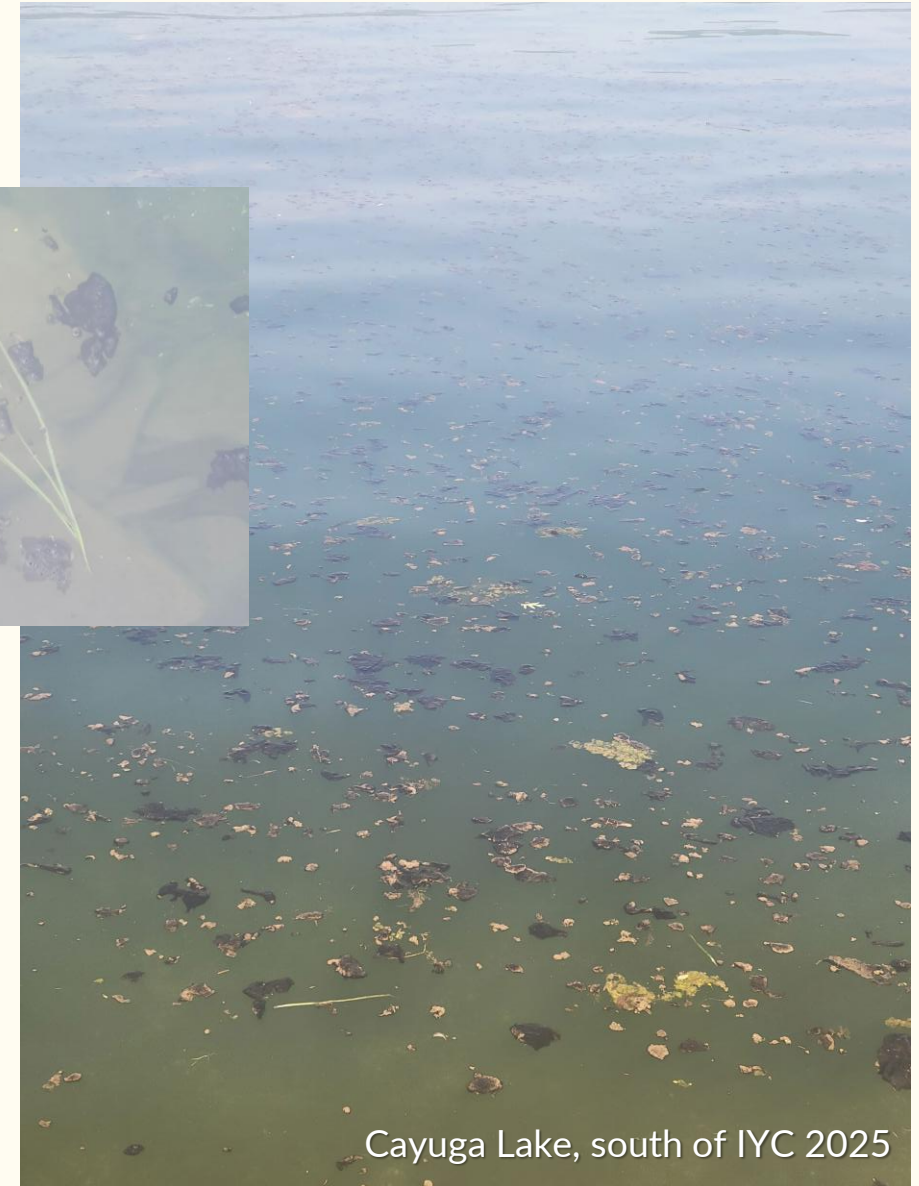
- Floating clumps found floating on the surface of the water
- Dislodged from the lake bottom (benthic)



# HABs Identification: Clumps

Physical characteristics:

- Often confused with goose poop



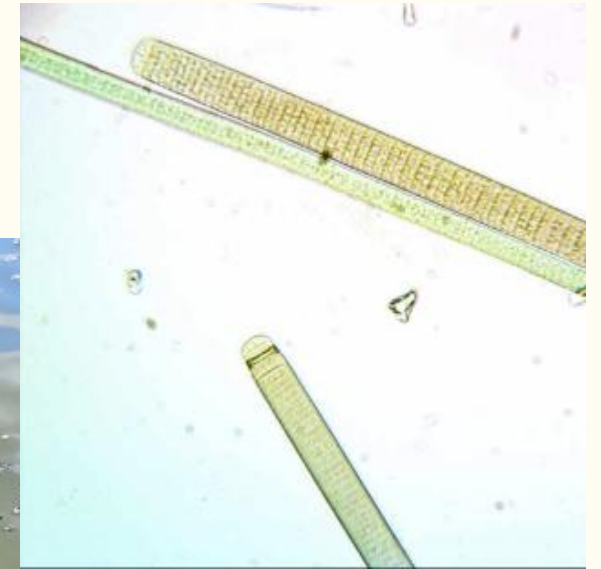
Cayuga Lake, south of IYC 2025



# 2024 Pilot Study: HAB Clumps

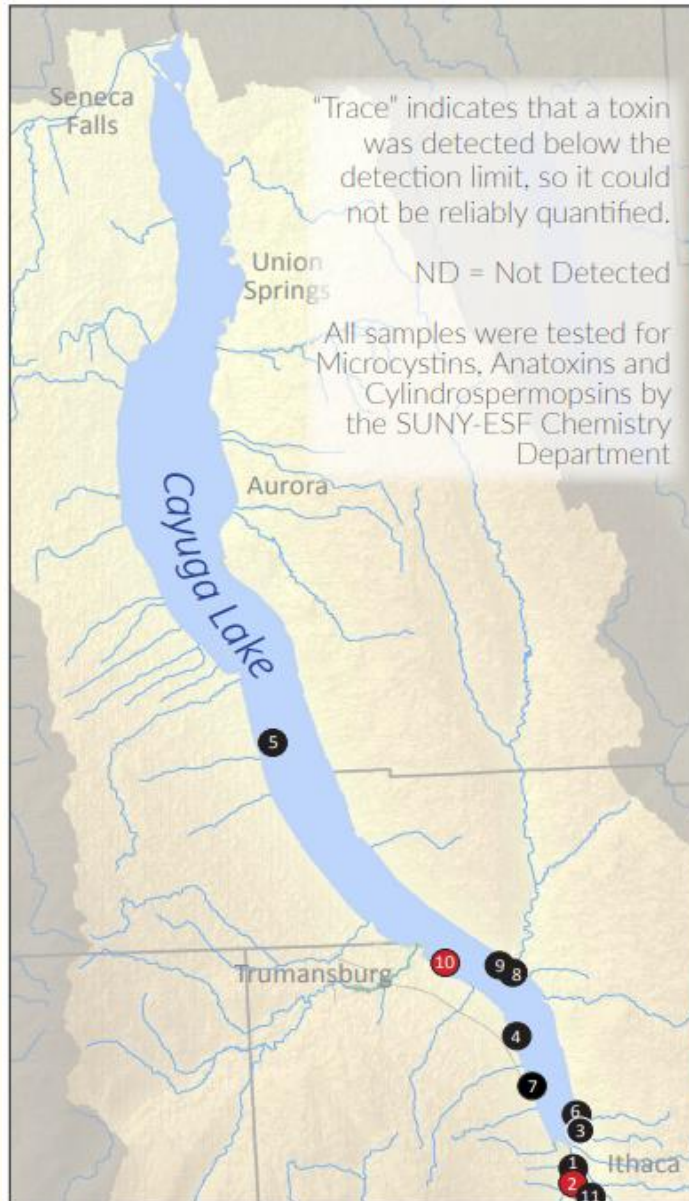
- Found in Cayuga Inlet and Southern half of Cayuga Lake in 2022, 2023 and 2024
- The clumps do not look like the “typical” HABs
- One sample was collected in 2023 and tested for a suite of toxins by Greg Boyer’s lab at SUNY ESF. No toxins were detected.
- In 2024, CSI invited volunteers to help report and sample these clumps
- Continuing in 2025

Order Oscillatoriales



Cayuga Inlet 2023

# 2024 Toxin Analysis of Benthic Cyanobacteria Clumps in Cayuga Lake



	Toxin results	Date	Latitude	Longitude	Location
1	ND	6/26/23	42.451327	-76.509745	Ithaca Farmer's Market dock
2	Anatoxins 3.424 µg/g	6/19/24	42.442883	-76.511762	Cayuga Inlet across from Deep Dive
3	ND	6/19/24	42.471473	-76.503798	East Shore Park
4	Trace Anatoxins ( $<0.044$ µg/g)	7/12/24	42.49487	-76.53679	Open water near outfall of Glenwood Creek
5	ND	7/12/24	42.633056	-76.686944	Open water north of Lively Run Creek
6	ND	7/14/24	42.472490	-76.504185	East Shore Park
7	ND	7/15/24	42.482194	-76.533695	Private west shore beach
8	ND	8/7/24	42.538568	-76.549924	Near Myer's Point swimming area
9	ND	8/13/24	42.3219	-76.330	South side of Salt Point
10	Anatoxins 1.349 µg/g	8/27/24	42.53749	-76.58387	Open water south of Taughannock
11	ND	9/5/24	42.436366	-76.512617	Flood Control Channel near Wegmans



# Not a HAB

## Pollen:

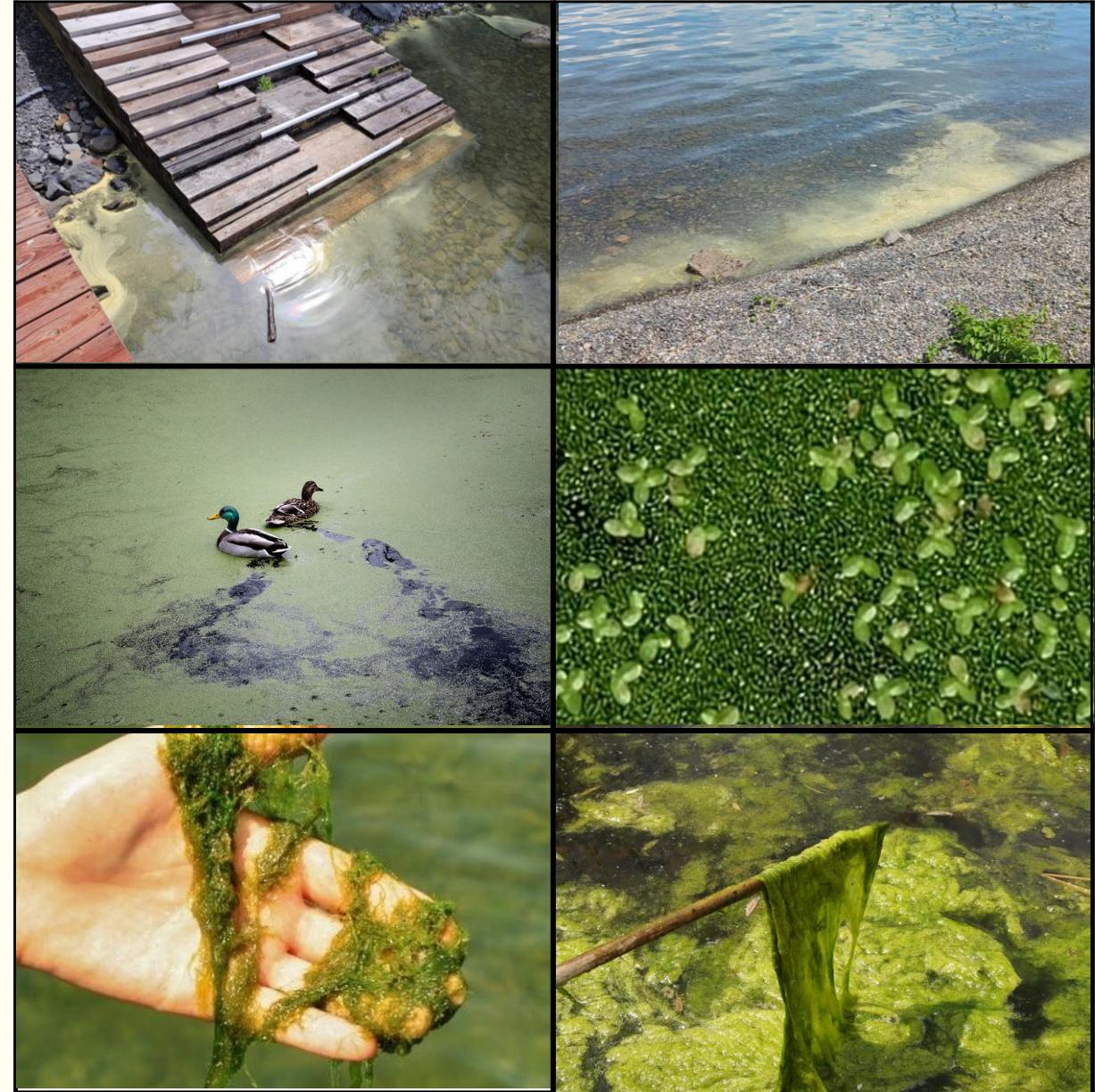
- Bright yellow
- Breaks up easily if you swirl the water
- Most common May-June (when trees are flowering)
- NOT harmful

## Duckweed/Watermeal

- The tiniest plants on earth
- “Tiny lily pads”
- Will separate in the water
- NOT harmful

## Other Algae (filamentous)

- Creates dense mats
- Long, stringy/hair-like strands
- Can build up on the shore
- NOT harmful





# Agenda

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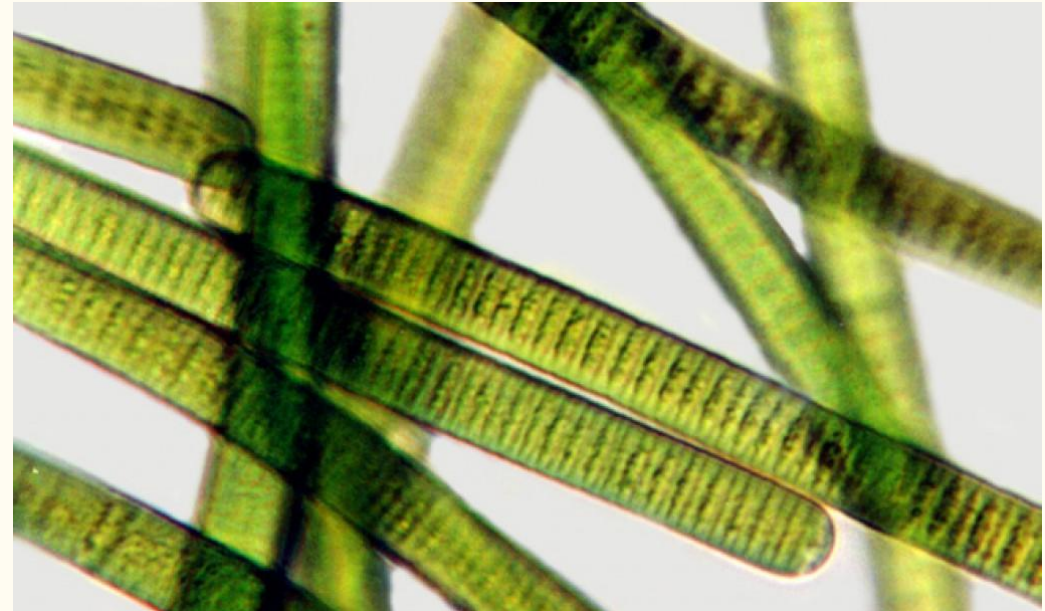
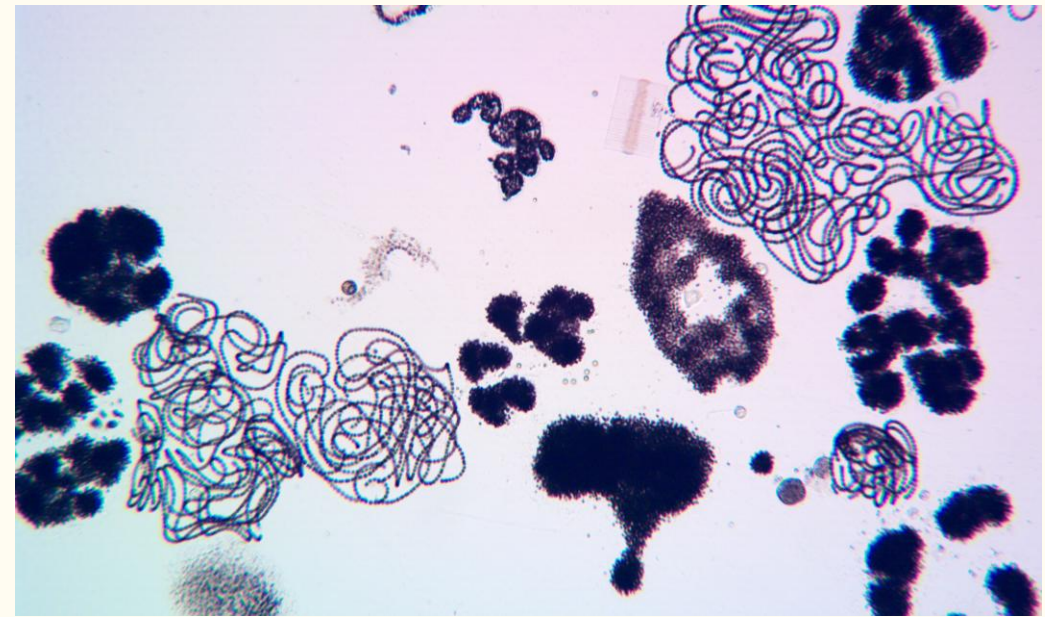
Milliken Station, Lansing  
7/10/25



# HABs and Health

## Cyano-toxins:

- Produced by most cyanobacteria
- No visual cues that toxins are present
- Toxin production not well understood
- Can not determine toxicity by LOOKING at a HAB
- **Types found in Cayuga Lake:**
  - Microcystins
    - Hepatotoxin- liver
    - Most common in Cayuga Lake
    - Associated with *Microcystis sp.* and *Dolichospermum sp.*
  - Anatoxins
    - Can affect the nervous system, respiratory function
    - Detected in “clumps”
    - Associated with *Oscillatoriales*





# Routes of Exposure to **HABs** Toxins:



Photo: Ricki Clark  
NY-89, Varick  
7/9/2025

## *Acute vs. Chronic*

1. Dermal
2. Inhalation
3. Consumption



ANY health effects should be reported to your local county department of health!



# Routes of Exposure: **Dermal**

➡ skin contact during swimming, boating, fishing, etc.





# Routes of Exposure: Inhalation

➡ aerosols created during household use or recreation





# Routes of Exposure: Inhalation

➡ aerosols created during household use or recreation



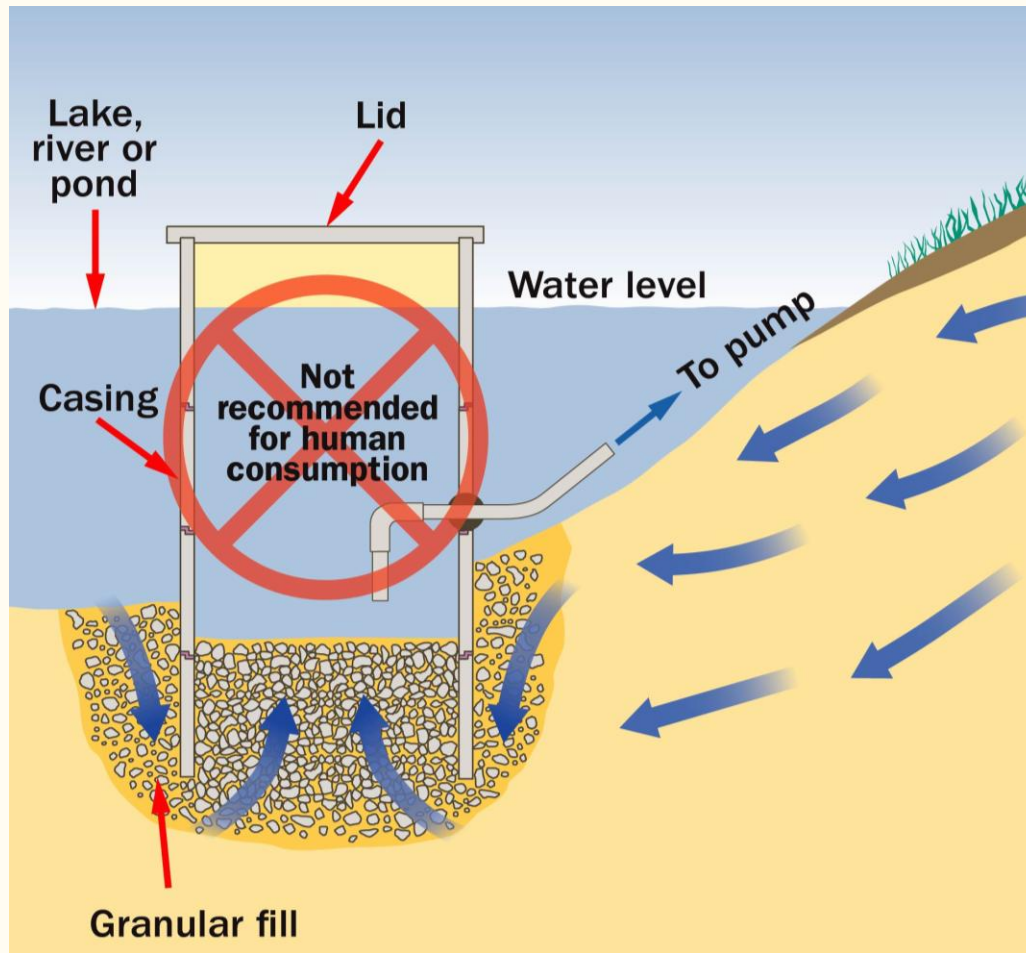






# Routes of Exposure: Consumption

→ incidental swallowing, sourcing drinking water from the lake via a beach/shoreline well





# What to do if you or a loved one is exposed:

## Humans:

- **Rinse off** yourself, children, and animals with clean water if exposed to blooms or surface scums, or water that is noticeably discolored.
- **Stop using the water** and consider medical attention if people or animals have symptoms and might have been exposed
- **Report any symptoms** to your local department of health [harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov](mailto:harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov)

**WARNING**

**Avoid Harmful  
Blue-green Algae Blooms**  
while swimming, fishing and boating



Keep kids and pets away from areas with blooms or scum.  
Swim, fish and boat in areas with no blooms or scum.

**Contact can make people and animals sick.**

If contact occurs, rinse with clean water.  
If symptoms occur, contact a medical provider.



Blooms can look like streaks, spilled paint, pea soup, floating clumps or dots.

Learn more: [www.health.ny.gov/HarmfulAlgae](http://www.health.ny.gov/HarmfulAlgae) and [on.ny.gov/hab](http://on.ny.gov/hab)

6/37 7/18



# What to do if your pet is exposed:



## Livestock/pets:

- Protect your pets and livestock by keeping them away from water that has signs of a HAB.
- Take action if your pets or livestock go near or into water with a HAB
- If your pets or livestock have been in the water, immediately wash them off with clean water to keep them from licking cyanobacteria off their fur.
- Call a veterinarian if your animal shows any of these signs:

*Loss of energy*

*Loss of appetite*

*Vomiting*

*Stumbling and falling*

*Diarrhea*

*Convulsions*

*Excessive drooling/foaming*

*Tremors and seizures*



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Fayette, NY  
7/9/25  
25-3400-B2



# Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program



**Purpose:** Collect actionable data on cyanobacteria blooms, protect public health, and relay bloom information and testing results quickly and efficiently.

HABs Harriers perform weekly shoreline surveys for HABs



Blooms are reported to CSI via HABs Hotline /Online Report Form



2025 Cayuga Lake Harmful Algal Bloom Volunteer Reporting Page

Community Science Institute  
Partnering with Communities to Protect Water

### Cayuga Lake HABs Volunteer Report Form

Please fill out this form as completely as possible.

If you are experiencing difficulty advancing or submitting the form, please check that you have answered each question that has a red asterisk (\*) is answered. That means it is a required question and you can not submit the form until all required questions are answered.

Thank you for taking the time to report, and for your diligence in the field! If you are experiencing any difficulties reporting a HAB, please contact Alyssa directly.

The name, email, and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form

\* Indicates required question





# Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program



## Changes to the program in 2025:

- No longer collecting samples for EVERY single report (or as near possible)
  - Repetitive data since 2018
  - Logistical nightmare
  - Very time consuming

## Things staying the same in 2025:

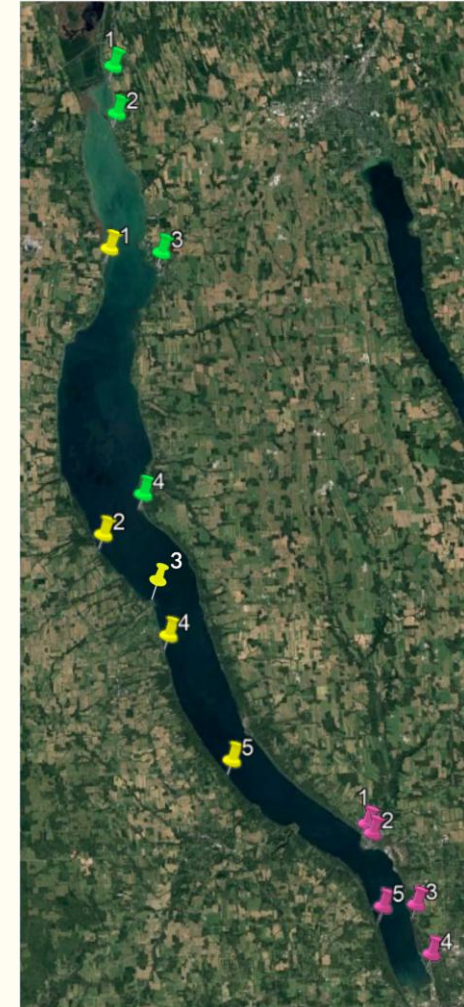
- Volunteers are monitoring all around Cayuga Lake and submitting reports
  - This is following NYSDEC's protocol
  - Pictures must be included as "proof"
- Community members can assist with reporting even easier than years prior!

## Are any samples being collected in 2025?

- Yes! From 14 "priority" sites identified by the DOH in the surrounding counties
- Each has some kind of public health implication
  - Regulated or Unregulated swimming area
  - Regulated water supply

## Priority Shoreline Areas for HABs Sampling in 2025

*Sites determined by each respective County Department of Health*



### Cayuga County

1. Cayuga Marina & Outfitters, Cayuga
2. Harris Park, Cayuga
3. Frontenac Park, Union Springs
4. Long Point State Park, Aurora



### Seneca County

1. Seneca Falls Water Treatment Plant, Seneca Falls
2. Thirsty Owl Wine Company, Ovid
3. Sheldrake Point, Ovid
4. O'Malleys & Cayuga Shoreline, Interlaken
5. Spotted Sandpiper, Trumansburg



### Tompkins County

1. Salt Point Preserve, Lansing
2. Lansing Harbor, Lansing
3. Bolton Point Intake, Ithaca
4. East Shore Park, Ithaca
5. Ithaca Yacht Club, Ithaca



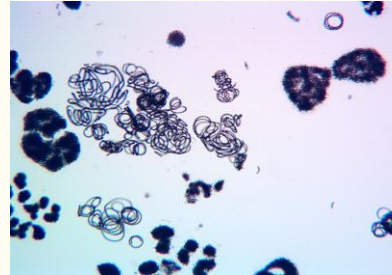
# Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program



Microscopy is performed to confirm presence of cyanobacteria



Samples are analyzed in CSI's state certified lab



HAB samples are analyzed to:

- Identify cyanobacteria genera
- Measure chlorophyll a (EPA 446.0 Rev. 1.2)
- Measure microcystin (EPA 546)





# Cayuga Lake **HABs** Monitoring Program



CSI alerts local DOH, posts HAB report/results on the database, and uploads to NYHABs



**Seneca County**  
Health Department



**Cayuga County**  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT





# Partner Organizations & Agencies



Cayuga Lake Weekly  
Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB)  
Newsletter & Report

51

BLOOM REPORTS  
7/5 - 7/11, 2025  
see map for locations





# Partner Organizations & Agencies



**Department  
of Health**



**New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation**

- Interagency collaborative effort (DEC, OPRHP, DOH)
- Operates NYHABS with DOH and OPRHP and issues bloom notifications
  - Health concerns & drinking water treatment overseen by local operators and DOH
  - Regulated swimming areas (beaches) have a protective response protocol based on visual observations



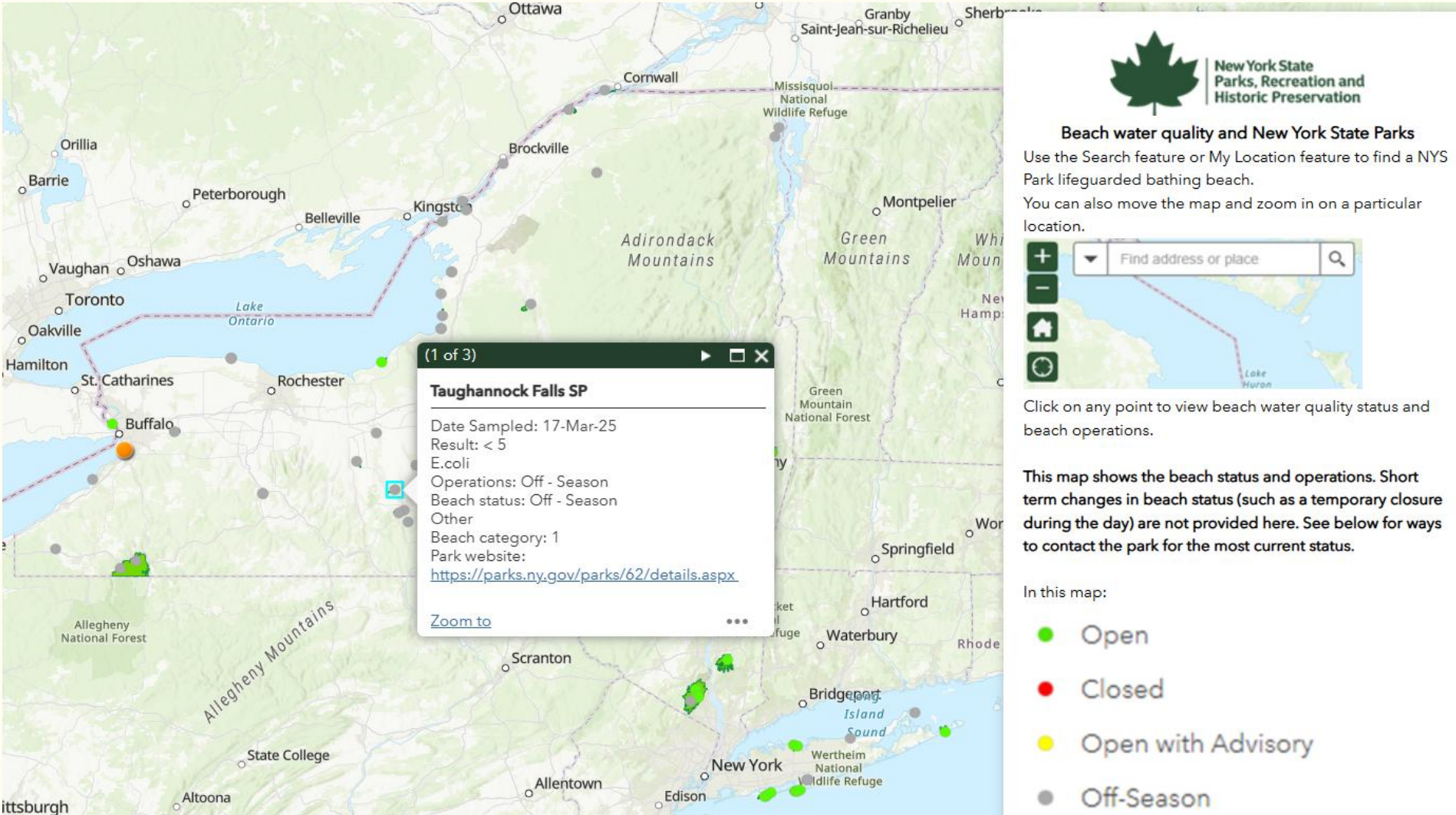
7/16/25 @ 2:00 pm



# Partner Organizations & Agencies

## OHPRP Beach Closure Map

7/16/25 @ 3:07 pm





# Agenda

- *Community Science Institute*
- *“HABs 101”*
- *HABs and Health*
- *Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program*
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- Get Involved/Stay Informed
- Acknowledgements & Q&A



South of Lansing Marina, Ithaca  
7/11/25  
25-3477-B2

# CSI's HABs Database

Community Science Institute

Database Home

About the Database

Streams and Lakes Chemistry

Download Streams and Lakes Data

**Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)**

Download Harmful Algal Blooms

Regional Groundwater Baseline

Download Groundwater Data

Welcome to the Cayuga Lake Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Database

**What is a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB)?**  
A harmful algal bloom (HAB) occurs when aquatic microorganisms, primarily cyanobacteria on Cayuga Lake, grow rapidly under favorable conditions. These blooms have the potential to impact the public health with regard to recreation (swimming) and consumption.

**Purpose of this Database**  
This database is designed to:  
a) Quickly alert you to recent reports of cyanobacteria blooms (HABs)  
b) Provide detailed information about each HAB reported  
c) Make it possible to analyze long-term patterns of HABs occurrences.

**Background**  
The Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program was launched in 2018, recording HABs and their location, approximate size, density, genera of cyanobacteria it contained, and concentration of microcystin (a toxin created by the most commonly detected genera of cyanobacteria on Cayuga Lake). The reporting of bloom occurrences in this database is organized by geography and by areas of recreational interest, for example, parks and boat launches. Thus, Cayuga Lake is divided into 34 shoreline segments and four open water segments for a total of 38 segments used to track HABs spatially along the shore and in the open water of Cayuga Lake.

**How to Use**  
Navigate the map to see HABs by geography. To view most recent suspicious and confirmed HABs click All, Year or Month at the top right. To view additional data select From/To dates and click Filter. Up-to-date information about a bloom, and the segment where it was reported, can be obtained by clicking the pins on the map or the list below.

**More Info & Reporting a HAB**  
[Click here](#) for more information about our Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program.

HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS (HABs) DATABASE

From Date: 2025-05-17 To Date: 2025-07-16 

Filter All Year Month

Number of HABs: 66

Map Satellite

Bloom Code: 25-3408-B1

Date: July 15, 2025

Segment: Lakeshore Segment Northeast 7: Wells College Boathouse

Community Science Institute's Harmful Algal Bloom Database-

FREE AND ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC!

Community Science Institute

Partnering with Communities to Protect Water

Community Science Institute (CSI) • [www.communityscience.org](http://www.communityscience.org) • [info@communityscience.org](mailto:info@communityscience.org)



# CSI's HABs Database

25-3439-B1

25 = Year

34## = Zone

B# = The # bloom reported from that zone

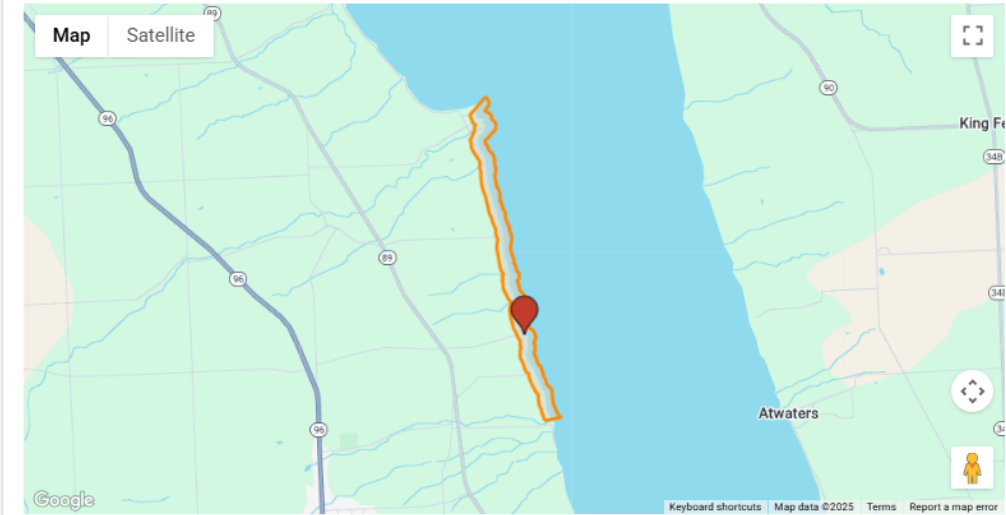
Contact Limits:

Drinking water  
0.3 µg/L

Recreation: 4  
µg/L

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Event Information		
Where	<div>Bloom Code 25-3439-B1</div>	
Water Body	Cayuga Lake	
Latitude and Longitude	42.6402, -76.69222	
Segment	Lakeshore Segment Southwest 10: Lively Run to Sheldrake Point	
County	Seneca	
Extent	Large Localized	
When		
Bloom Reported	July 08, 2025 05:15 PM	
Bloom Sampled	July 08, 2025 05:25 PM	
Microscopic Examination	July 09, 2025	
What		
Bloom Genera <sup>[1]</sup>		
Microscopy	Present	Dominant
Dolichospermum	✓	✓
Bloom Chemistry		
Total Microcystin and Nodularins (EPA 546) <sup>[2]</sup>	4.46 ug/L	

Map of HAB event



Bloom Description

Volunteer reports: Overcast/ 75 degrees /calm /one dead fish @ Cayuga Shoreline Part of western shoreline bloom event

Weather

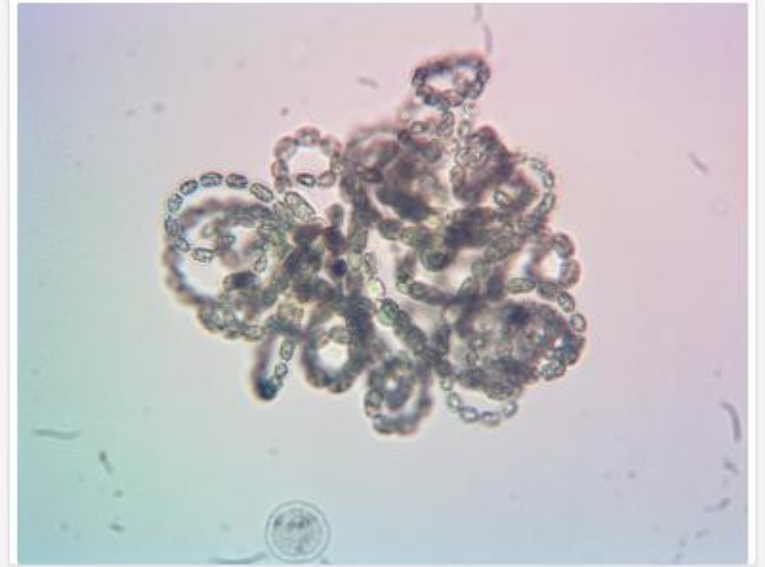
Weather

Cloudy

Wind speed

Wind direction

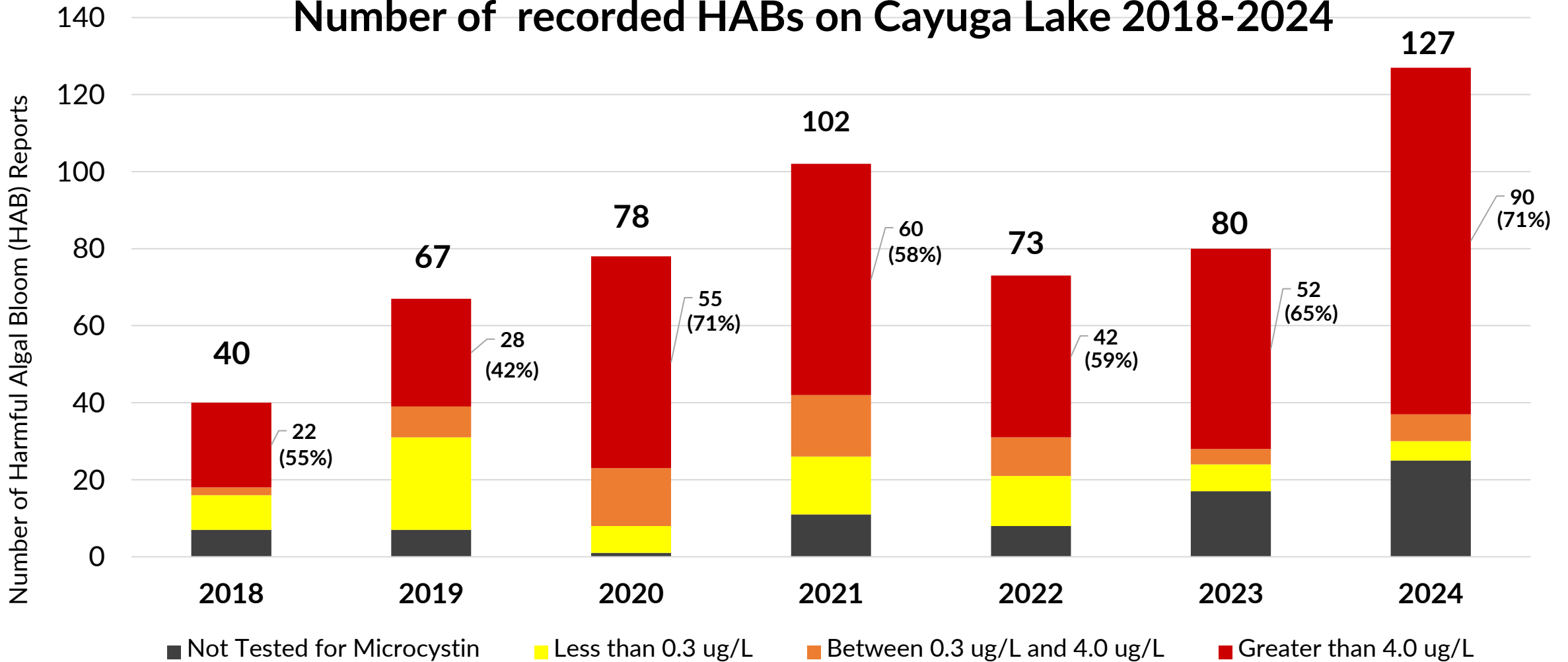
# CSI's **HABs** Database





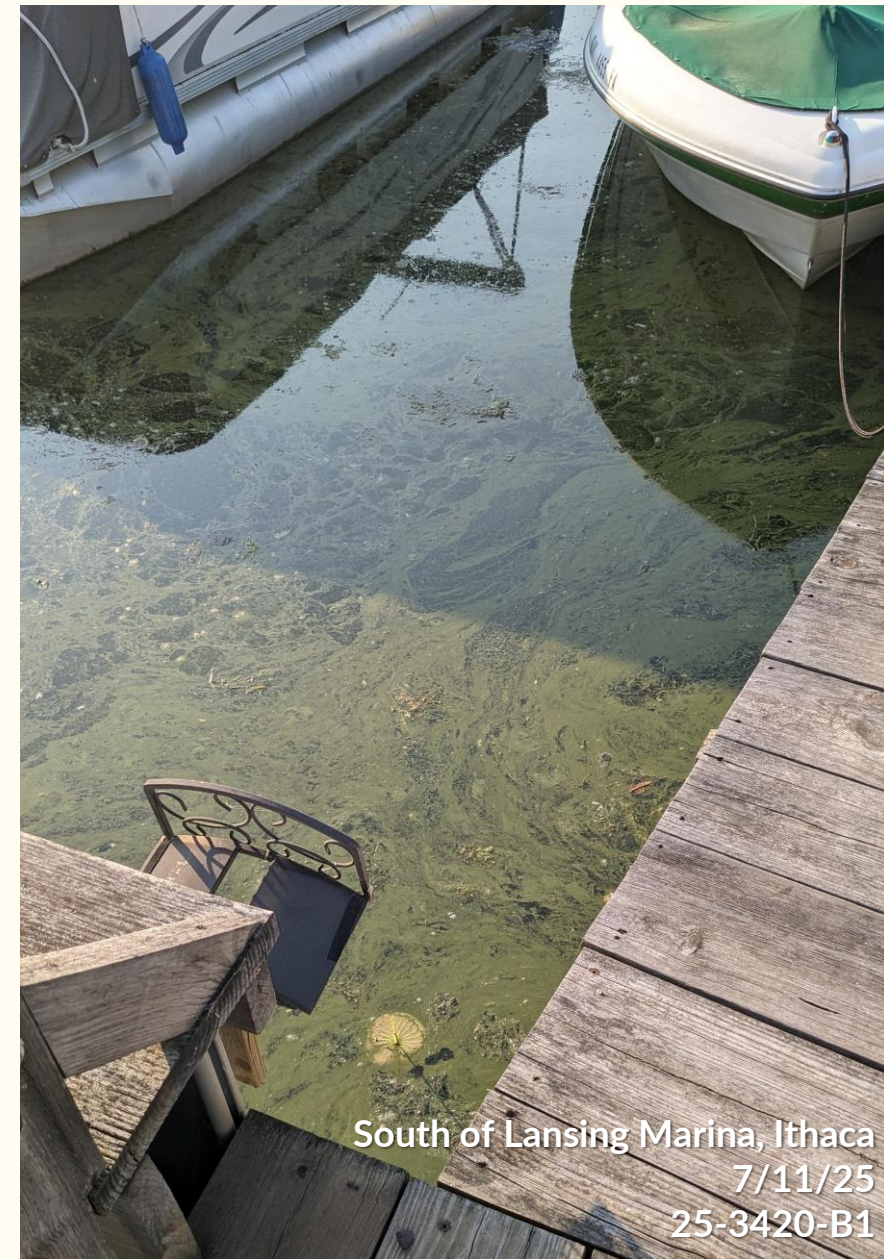
# CSI's HABs Database

Number of recorded HABs on Cayuga Lake 2018-2024



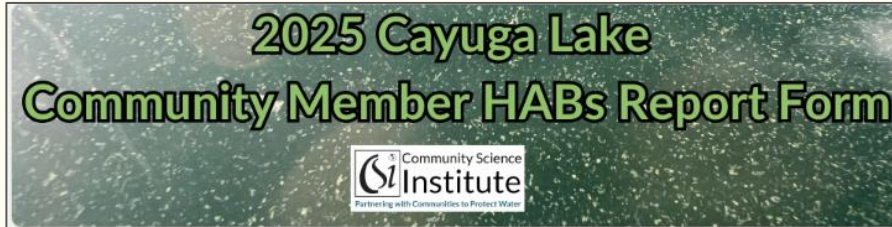
# Agenda

- *Community Science Institute*
- *“HABs 101”*
- *HABs and Health*
- *Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program*
- *CSI’s HABs Database*
- **Get Involved/Stay Informed**
- **Acknowledgements & Q&A**





# Get Involved/Stay Informed:



## 2025 Community Member Cayuga Lake HABs Report Form

[Community Science Institute](#) oversees all daily operations of the Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program, including volunteer coordination, sample collection, sample analysis, and data management.

This form is used by community members to report a suspected harmful algal bloom (HAB) on Cayuga Lake. Receiving as much information as possible, as quickly as possible after the HAB is observed, is very helpful to CSI's Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program. Upon receipt of your report, the Coordinator will reach out to you for follow up. Please be sure you are available to respond to a follow up call.

Reporting a suspected HAB hours or days after it has been observed is not ideal, as HABs can dissipate quickly.

To view all of the HABs reports/data collected to CSI on Cayuga Lake (2018-present), visit the [CSI HABs Database](#).

Or email [HABsHotline@gmail.com](mailto:HABsHotline@gmail.com)

SCAN QR CODE TO REPORT A HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM ON CAYUGA LAKE



COMMUNITY SCIENCE INSTITUTE - (607) 257-6606  
[HABsHotline@gmail.com](mailto:HABsHotline@gmail.com) - [www.communityscience.org](http://www.communityscience.org)



**Community Science Institute**  
Partnering with Communities to Protect Water

## CAYUGA LAKE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Monitoring

**There are 3 ways to get involved:**

- 1) Monitor the "zone", 1x/week
- 2) Assist with transport of samples from Romulus/Albion to the Lab in Ithaca

- Orientation: **September 29/25 - 10/1/25.**
- The official monitoring period is **October 1/25 - 10/1/25.**
- Monitoring: Volunteers are encouraged to check their assigned zone at least 1x/week during the time period.
- Observations: take 2 pictures of the bloom and fill out the report form.

Transport Volunteers are contacted "on-call" to assist with transporting samples to the CSI Lab in Ithaca.


**For more information:**  
607-257-6606  
[info@communityscience.org](mailto:info@communityscience.org)

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:**

-  Seneca County Health Department
-  Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
-  Tompkins County Whole Health
-  Cayuga County Health Department

# Get Involved/Stay Informed:

## CSI's Monthly Email Updates



Community Science  
**Institute**  
Partnering with Communities to Protect Water

Join our mailing list to receive monthly updates, event notifications, and newsletters!

Email Address

First Name

Last Name


Preferred format

☒ HTML

☐ Plain-text

Subscribe

## CLWN Weekly Updates to the Public



Weekly summer updates published by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network,  
in partnership with the Community Science Institute.

Did someone forward this email to you? Click [HERE](#) to subscribe directly!

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**JULY 11, 2025**

This week, Cayuga Lake experienced a **lake-wide Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) event** — with 51 (and counting) reports submitted.

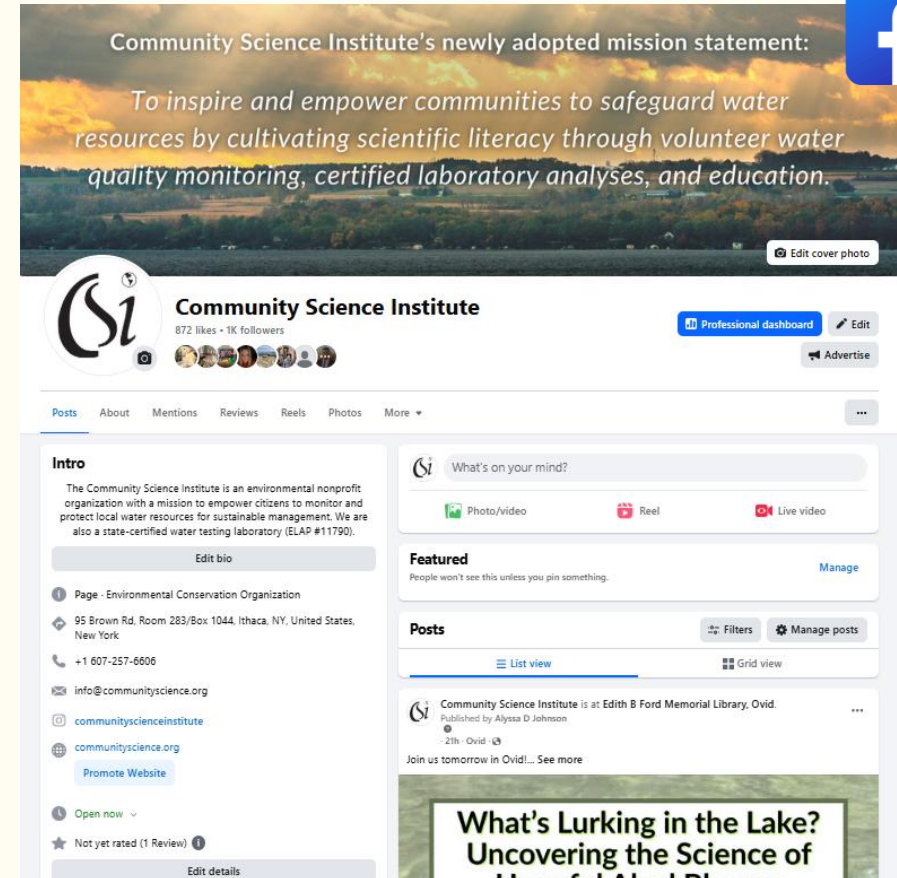
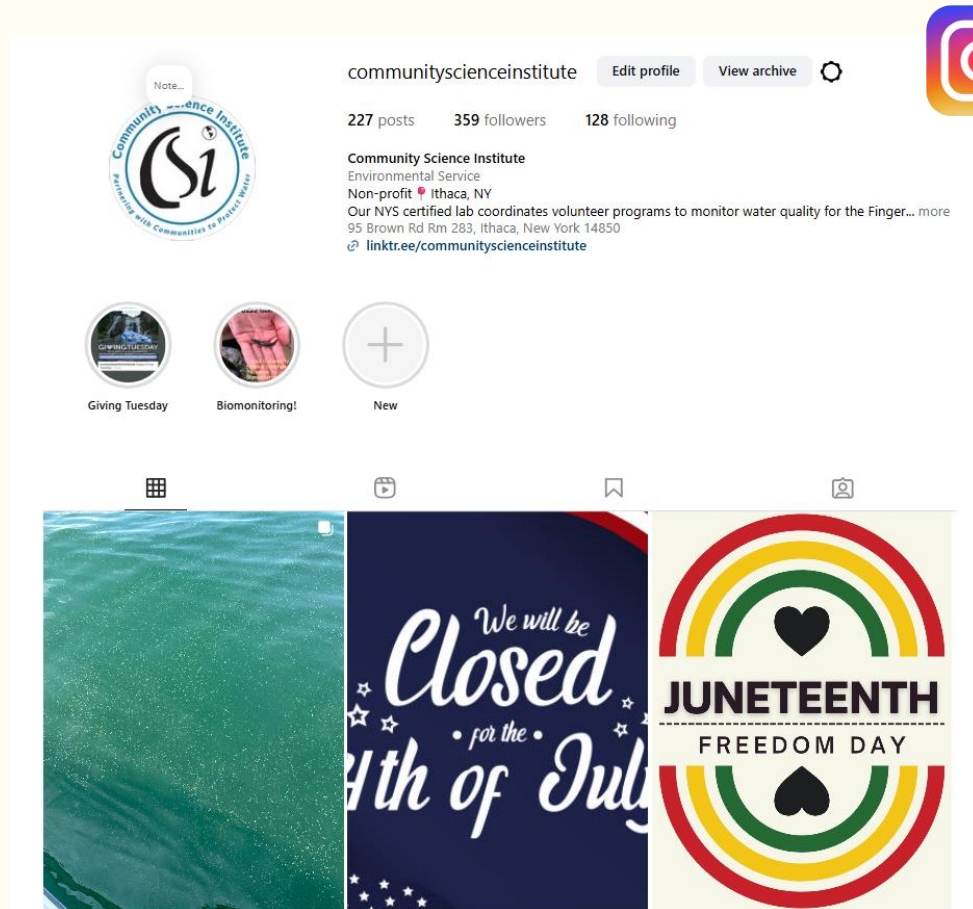
July 5: 1 Report  
July 8: 19 Reports  
July 9: 24 Reports  
July 10: 5 Reports  
July 11: 2 Reports

Thanks to trained volunteers and vigilant community members using the [community reporting form](#), there has been a surge of observations from all around the lake. While many of these reports may represent multiple reports of the same widespread, prolonged bloom, the volume and spread make clear this is an unusually intense event. You can view the map below to get an



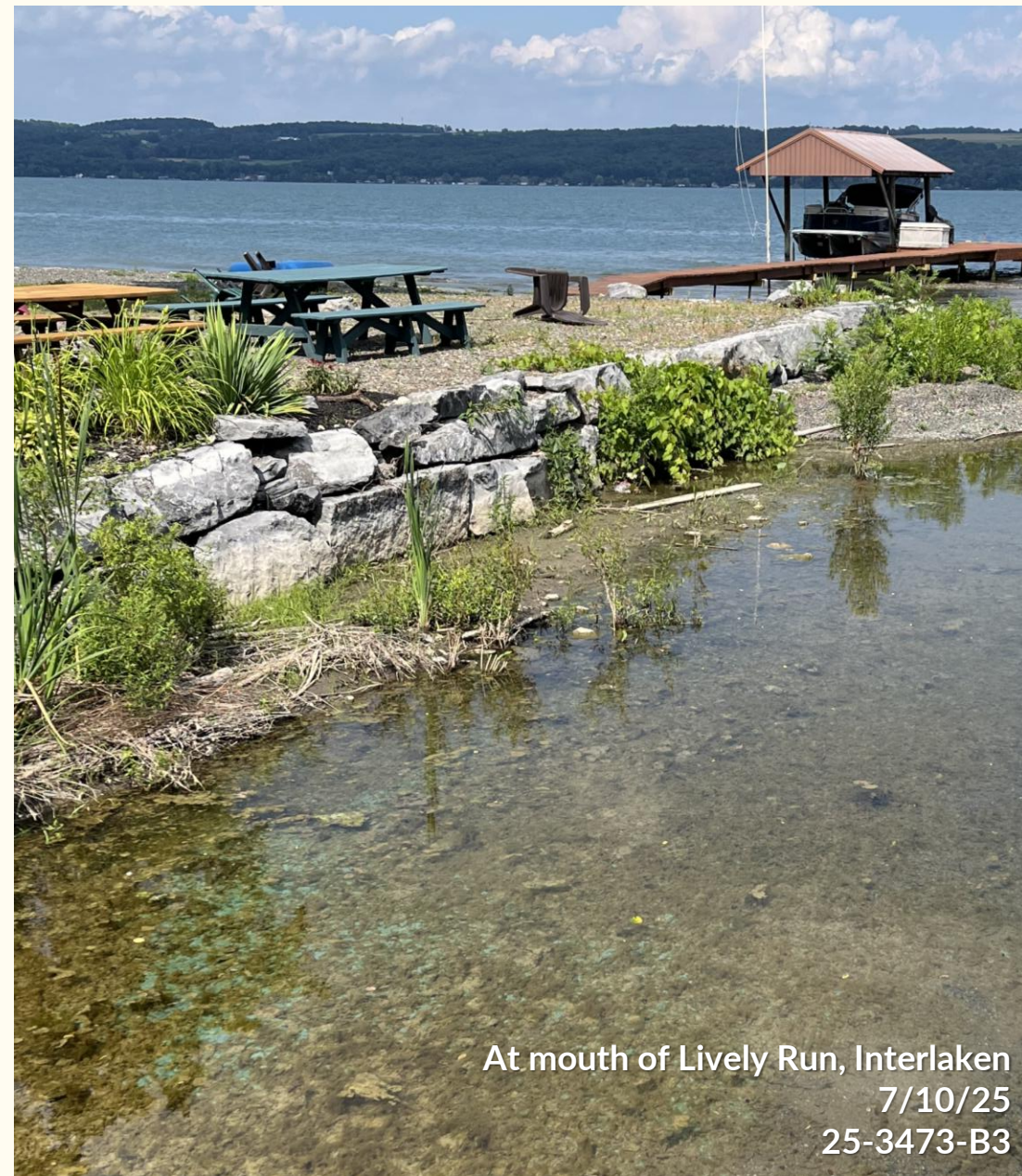
# Get Involved/Stay Informed:

## Follow CSI on Social Media



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- *Get Involved/Stay Informed*
- **Acknowledgements & Q&A**



At mouth of Lively Run, Interlaken  
7/10/25  
25-3473-B3



# Acknowledgements

## CSI Staff Past and Present

- Grascen Shidemantle, Executive Director
- Noah Mark, Laboratory Director
- Adrianna Hirtler, Biomonitoring Coordinator
- Rama Hoetzlein, Database Developer

**ALL 104 DEDICATED  
HABs HARRIERS  
& CARRIERS!!!**

## Programmatic Support



Seneca County  
Health Department



Cayuga County  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

TOMPKINS COUNTY  
**Whole Health**

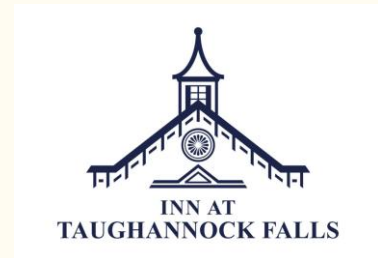


## CSI Members & NEW Business Members



FINGER LAKES  
Wealth Management

FARMER GROUP



# Questions?

Alyssa Johnson

[alyssa@communityscience.org](mailto:alyssa@communityscience.org)

607-257-6606

95 Brown Road/Suite 283

Ithaca, NY 14850

North end looking SE towards Cayuga  
7/11/25

Photo: Nicholas Leonard Dronography



# To HAB or Not to HAB?

**✗ NOT** a HAB (probably)





# To **HAB** or Not to **HAB**? Test your ID skills:



**HAB** ✓



# To HAB or Not to HAB?



**✗ NOT a HAB**

# To **HAB** or Not to **HAB**?

## **HAB** ✓





# To **HAB** or Not to **HAB**?



**HAB** ✓



# To HAB or Not to HAB?

**✗ NOT a HAB**





# To HAB or Not to HAB?

## HAB ✓



# To HAB or Not to HAB?



**✗ NOT a HAB**





# To **HAB** or Not to **HAB**?



**HAB** ✓



# To HAB or Not to HAB?

**✗ NOT a HAB**





# To **HAB** or Not to **HAB**?



**HAB** ✓

# To HAB or Not to HAB?

**✗ NOT a HAB**





# Agenda

- *Community Science Institute*
- *Partner Organizations & Agencies*
- *“HABs 101”*
- *Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program*
- *2024 Monitoring Season in Review*
- **Get Involved!**
- **Acknowledgements & Q&A**

