Normandale Lake
Water Quality Improvement Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How was Normandale Lake made?
A: In the late 1970s, a dam was built across Nine Mile Creek to reduce downstream flooding. Building the dam resulted in a shallow lake that is less than 4.5 feet deep in most spots. Before that, the area was a wetland and farm fields.

Q: Why is Normandale Lake so shallow?
A: The west side of the lake was originally a wetland. Because the lake was built in an existing wetland, it had to receive a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. A deeper lake would not have received the needed permits for construction.

Q: What’s the problem?
A: You may have noticed a rotten-egg smell and algae growth in and around the lake. High levels of the nutrient phosphorous lead to unsightly algae growth and bad smells in the lake. Low oxygen levels in the lake can also lead to bad smells.

Normandale Lake has too much of the invasive plant, Curly-leaf Pondweed. While it is normal to have plants in a shallow lake like Normandale, invasive plants, like Curly-leaf Pondweed, can throw off the balance and keep better, native plants from growing.

Q: What kind of work will be done?
A: Water will be drained from Normandale to expose the lake bottom to freezing temperatures during the winter. Freezing temperatures kill Curly-leaf Pondweed turions (seeds) preventing them from growing in the spring. Because Nine Mile Creek flows through the lake, not all water will be drained from the lake. In spring 2019, the areas where water remained will be treated with herbicide to kill any Curly-leaf Pondweed that wasn’t killed as part of the drawdown.

Q: When will the project happen?
Q: Won’t draining water from the lake be bad for animals?
A: Most of the animals will be able to leave on their own and seek safer spots while this work happens. We are working with the Department of Natural Resources to develop a plan to protect turtles and other wildlife. More information will be posted here as the plan develops. Also, there will be water left in the lake during this work, because Nine Mile Creek flows through the lake.

Q: How long will the lake be empty?
A: We plan to start draining water from the lake in mid-August 2018. The lake will stay mostly empty until the beginning of March when the lake will start refilling. With Nine Mile Creek flowing through the lake, it will only take 3-4 weeks to refill.

Q: Why will the lake be empty for so long?
A: The parts of the Curly-leaf Pondweed that grow into new plants (called turions) found in the lake bottom need to be exposed to freezing temperatures to die. In spring 2019, we will spot treat with herbicide any Curly-leaf Pondweed that wasn’t killed and grew in the spring. Endothall is the herbicide most commonly used to treat Curly-leaf Pondweed.

Q: What is endothall?
A: Endothall is a contact herbicide that prevents certain plants, like Curly-leaf Pondweed, from making the proteins they need. Signs will be posted prior to the start of treatment in the lake.

Q: Will the trails around Normandale remain open?
A: Yes, the trails will remain open for people to use during the project.

Q: I walk around the lake every day. What should I expect?
A: This fall, you should expect there to be less water in the lake than you are used to. After water is drained from the lake, existing plants in the lake will die. As the plants break down, there may be a bad smell coming from the lake. In the spring, you will see cattails moving further into the lake. These will go away once water levels return to normal.
Q: Is anything else being done to improve the lake?
A: Yes. An in-lake alum treatment will also be done. This work won’t be noticeable, but it will have many benefits. Alum is the short name for aluminum sulfate. It binds to phosphorous in the water so it can’t be used by algae for food. The bound phosphorous (called floc) drops to the lake bottom. The floc makes a layer on the bottom of the lake and keeps additional phosphorous that is stored in the sediment from being released into the water.

Q: How long will the alum treatment last?
A: We expect this to last 7 to 10 years, which allows more time for work to be done upstream to reduce nutrients getting to the lake.

Q: What will the lake look like when the work is done?
A: Normandale Lake will support plants growing over most of the lake bed. Our intent is to increase aquatic plant diversity and improve water quality, while reducing nuisance odors and algae blooms. We will continue to monitor the lake to assess the effectiveness of the project.

Q: Is there anything I can do to help protect Normandale Lake?
A: Yes! Visit www.adopt-a-drain.org to find tips for protecting clean water. While you are there, you can sign up to adopt a storm drain near your house. By adopting a storm drain, you will receive a yard sign that will show your neighbors you care about clean water.