

# Toxic Algae In Fresh Water Lakes, Ponds Rising On Long Island

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**LAKE RONKONKOMA, N.Y. (CBSNewYork)** — Suffolk County leads New York in toxic algae in fresh water lakes and ponds as the area is seeing an increase in the algae that can cause sickness and even death.

CBS2's Carolyn Gusoff reported that Lake Ronkonkoma is on a swelling list of Long Island lakes and ponds often afflicted with toxic blue-green algae, as new data shows a sharp increase.

“In 2012, Suffolk County had one lake with blue-green algae. Last year, we had 16 lakes contaminated,” Adrienne Esposito of the Citizens Campaign for the Environment said.

Lake Ronkonkoma resident Jim Gaffney said he often sees a murky green slime on the lake.

“It just looked like a scum kind of on the water and it stank. The whole lake had an unpleasant odor,” Gaffney said.

This year's not off to a good start. There are already two lakes that are tainted with the toxic bloom, caused in part by pollution from nitrogen seeping up from leaky septic systems and running off from fertilized lawns.

"While this is an ecological travesty, it's also an economic travesty for our region," Bob DeLuca of Group for the East End said.

The algae is a public health threat as the bacteria can cause organ damage. Dogs have died, poisoned from licking algae-covered paws.

"It's simply not something you clearly want to drink and it's something you want to avoid," Carl LoBlue of the Nature Conservancy said.

Politicians are debating how to pay for hooking up 350,000 homes to sewers as some say these new numbers underline the urgency.

"Having more of this kind of algae than any other place in New York state is not a contest you want to win," Dick Amper of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society said. "Suffolk is out in front of it now, we've got to reverse that now."

As the weather warms up, people may come across toxic algae outbreaks that are not even posted yet. Experts said if water looks like a pea soup, it's not safe for you, your pets or your family.

The Suffolk County Executive has proposed a voter referendum to fund new sewers and the needed upgrades to sewage treatment plants.

<http://cbsloc.al/2350rIE>