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Deep Creek Lake - Garrett County, Maryland Frequently Asked Questions Spring 2013

Is Deep Creek Lake clean?

Yes! Since 1950, The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has intermittently tested water *clarity*—one of the best indicators of water *quality*—in Deep Creek Lake. Studies show that, despite occasional variations, the water clarity in the Lake is very similar to the clarity in 1953.

Is it safe to swim in the Lake?

Absolutely! The Garrett County Health Department regularly tests bacterial contamination (they've done so since 1965), sampling 21 sites around the Lake, including coves and near shore that are particularly sensitive to bacteria. The results: According to County Environmental Health Director Steve Sherrard, bacteria levels in Deep Creek Lake are very low and are not increasing.

Is sediment "filling in" the Lake?

No. Silt and Sedimentation through erosion is a natural process that occurs across all landscapes. Landscape runoff contributes in a significant manner to shoreline erosion as well as the more obvious and understandable erosion that occurs from the energy of wind and water driven waves meeting a shoreline. Human activities on land and water often increase the rate and volume of sedimentation.

DNR is conducting a study to determine the source and flow of sediments into the Lake. The study will be released later in the year, however preliminary results show that some coves have more sediment deposits, while some coves are seeing almost none.

What is the status of the Lake's fish populations?

Deep Creek Lake supports 18 fish species, including a healthy and popular **Walleye** fishery with legal-size fish averaging 15-17" and occasional opportunities at trophy size fish and a well-balanced **Yellow Perch** population with fish ranging from 5 – 12 inches.

The lake's most sought after gamefish, **Smallmouth Bass**, continues to maintain sustainable harvest levels and a diverse age and size structure. The **Largemouth Bass** population – reduced in a small amount in 2010 by a fish kill caused by warmer than normal water temperature – experienced good reproduction in 2012, and 10,000 fingerlings were stocked to enhance the population.

Golden Shiners are the lake's most abundant forage fish, and **Bluegill** and **Pumpkinseed** populations are common to abundant with enough quality size fish to interest anglers. **Northern Pike** are becoming more common, and **Chain Pickerel** are very abundant. **Common Carp**, which are plentiful and reach very large sizes, are also generating increasing angler interest.

About 5,000 **Brown, Rainbow** and **Golden Trout** are stocked annually, and adequate coldwater and oxygen at the lake bottom during summer allow for year-round angling opportunities. All of the fish species in the Lake thrive there because of quality lake habitat which includes a variety of submerged aquatic vegetation, good water quality and much adjacent forested landscapes.

What can I do to help protect the Lake?

You can do your part to help slow the effects of erosion by planting more native plants on your property -- plants that will soak up the precipitation. When water runs off surfaces that are too compacted to absorb the water, it carries silt, soil particles sediments, and pollution with it. A wide buffer of shrubs and deep rooted grasses at the shoreline as well as trees and shrubs planted up the slope along driveways, decks and homes will help to keep the Lake healthy, improve our landscape and often increase your property value!

If you move your vessel between bodies of water, be cautious about bringing along "hitch-hikers". These can be plants or animals that don't presently live in Deep Creek Lake now, but once released here, could invade, upset the balance of the lake ecology and replace our native populations. Wash and dry any equipment used in other bodies of water (fishing tackle, waders, boats – hulls of all sorts, life jackets, paddles, props etc.) to remove plants and animals (they can be very small) before heading out to recreate on another body of water.