

Our Lakes
Dane County Executive Joe Parisi
Article Submitted by Dana Warren

Dane County has been and will continue to be a leader in our efforts to clean up our lakes.

The challenges our lakes face today accumulated over decades and there is no cheap, simple, short term fix. Like all of the important work we do, sustained partnerships and a shared will to implement effective solutions will incrementally bring improvement and progress.

That progress is worth noting. Over the past five years, Dane County led efforts - - manure digesters, our storm water grants, and farm by farm conservation practices - - have prevented over 12,000 pounds of phosphorus from entering our local waters. In more tangible terms, one pound of phosphorus is enough to grow 500 pounds of mucky green algae.

While miles of buffer strips are being planted separating fields from waterways and other important work happens on a regular basis with our partners in agriculture, innovation offers us incredible opportunity. We are beginning work on a new technology which will turn a brown watery by-product of the manure digestion process, into clear potable water and remove 100% of the phosphorus.

Our incredibly popular storm water outflow program replaces decades' old sewer pipes that direct runoff from rains right into our lakes. At the end of 2016, this program will be stopping the flow of over 607,000 pounds, equivalent to 30 dump truck loads of sediment, and over 2,700 pounds of phosphorus from getting into our lakes each year. We will continue to invest in this proven tactic.

While it's imperative we continue to invest in long term solutions to address the sources of phosphorus, the root cause of what challenges our lakes, short-term strategic improvements ensure families can better enjoy these waters while our hard work progresses. That is why we are constructing the County's first "Clean Beach Corridor". Open for this summer's swimming season, this clean corridor sets up a protected, filtered pool of water within Lake Mendota.

We must continue our investment, our work and our partnerships to clean our lakes. They are an imperative part of what makes Dane County such a wonderful place to live and visit.