



August 29, 2026
Frequently Asked Questions Received



We have received questions regarding the current condition at **Sanford Lake**. Recall the Sanford Lake basin was empty since May 2020 and filled to summer level this past Spring.

Sanford Lake is currently experiencing a fish kill scenario and is coordinating with both the MI DNR Fishery Biologist and EGLE to learn more.

At this point, the Sanford Lake Association reports “based on the information available so far, the signs continue to indicate that a harmful algal bloom (HAB) is likely responsible for the recent fish kill.” [Sanford Lake Fish Kill Update: What We Know](#)

“Despite the name, HABs are not caused by traditional algae. They are often caused by cyanobacteria, commonly called blue-green algae. Under favorable conditions—such as hot weather, stagnant water, and abundant nutrients—cyanobacteria can multiply rapidly.”

“Some cyanobacteria produce toxins, while others can contribute to fish mortality by changing water conditions, including depleting dissolved oxygen as the bloom develops and organic material decomposes.”

“Why could this be happening in Sanford Lake?”

“The recent refill of Sanford Lake has created a unique set of conditions.”

“For approximately six years, the lake bottom was exposed. When the reservoir refilled, vegetation and other organic material became submerged and began decomposing, which likely released nutrients into the water. Nutrients that accumulated in the exposed bottomlands may also have been resuspended during the refill.”

“These nutrients—particularly nitrogen and phosphorus—can provide fuel for cyanobacterial growth. Nutrients entering the lake through watershed runoff can contribute as well.”

“The lake’s ecosystem is also still re-establishing itself following the refill. Aquatic plants and filamentous algae are an important part of that process. Healthy aquatic vegetation can compete with cyanobacteria for nutrients and light, help retain nutrients in the system, and provide important habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms.”

The average depth of Sanford Lake is listed under 10 feet. For comparison, while Secord does not have an average depth listed, it reaches depths of 40 plus feet.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SECORD LAKE?

Secord will refill this coming April. Recall Secord was NOT empty, rather drawn down currently about 4-1/2 feet below summer level. Meaning, the eco system and fishery in Secord Lake is thriving.

Unlike Sanford, Secord did not experience almost 6 years of nuisance tree and weed growth on the entire lake bottom to create conditions for decomposing organic material mentioned above. Secord property owners, aided by Secord Township and the Lake Association have coordinated clearing of the lakebed of nuisance trees in the boating lanes and removing it from the lakebed.

In addition, the three Townships have been treating Secord Lake for aquatic plant and weed growth since the drawdown. This management by PLM has helped manage aquatic plant / weed growth.

We have collaborated with April Morey, DNR Fisheries Biologist, since October 2025. The team conducted a net survey of Secord Lake in May 2026 with plans for more research when the water returns to summer level.

[You can read more here.](#)

Regarding Sanford, April reports the only species specifically noted in the HAB-related fish kill has been common carp. While DNR certainly does not want to see unnecessary fish mortality, carp are not a desirable component of the fishery, so the observed mortality does not appear to represent a significant loss of the sport fish community.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

As we prepare Secord for summer level, removing anything that can float will help. Property owners can manage their lakefront and help their neighbors as well. As Secord has over 69 miles of shoreline and 1100 acres of water, we do anticipate challenges.

That said, if each of the 2,015 properties responsibly manage their lakefront area, we will be helping our lake tremendously when water returns. The Secord Lake Association has collaborated with MI EGLE, MI DNR, FLTF, Spicer Engineering and others to communicate the Retake Our Lake campaign since 2022. As mentioned, the participation of most Secord property owners has been outstanding.

We also learned the negative impact of lawn fertilizer containing phosphorus. Please check the fertilizer applied to lawns to seek alternatives that contain no phosphorus. On the fertilizer bag, there should be a number system. The first number represents the nitrogen level; second number the phosphorus level; and third number represents the potassium level. There are lawn fertilizers available containing ZERO phosphorus.

April from the DNR reminds us of things property owners can do that will have lasting benefits like maintaining or restoring a natural shoreline, establishing no-mow/vegetated buffer zones, minimizing fertilizer use, and otherwise reducing runoff directly into the lake. Those practices will continue to benefit the lake long after the initial refill period is over. [Learn more here.](#) Or listen to a [webinar here.](#)

As we enter the final months ahead of April 2027, THE FINAL COUNTDOWN campaign focuses efforts on what we can all do now to help Secord next summer. [Learn more about THE FINAL COUNTDOWN here.](#)

We do not know what challenges are ahead of us. Our lake has gone through changes in the past 6 years during the drawdown regarding aquatic plants and management techniques. This is a consistent message we have heard from other resources regarding fishery, geese, and lake levels. The lake we knew in 2019 will not be the same lake that returns. It will take time for the entire eco system to rebalance and for the lake to settle into a new normal.

We can help our Lake now by removing anything that can float. Please remove cut weed debris, nuisance trees and do not put Fall leaves into the lakebed. Doing so will only create nutrients that may aid in the growth of aquatic nuisances next summer.

Should you have additional questions, we welcome them at SecordLakeAssociation@gmail.com or you can visit us at www.SecordLakeAssociation.org

< END >