

Cladophora



What is *Cladophora*?

Cladophora is a naturally occurring filamentous algae that accumulates along the shorelines of the Great Lakes during the summer months. It grows primarily on rock but often becomes detached through wave action and wind, accumulating along the shoreline in algal mats. This leads to unsightly, foul-smelling beaches that people don't want to visit.

What is the Problem?

Algal mats that accumulate along the lakeshore can become quite odorous as they decay and may attract nuisance animals such as seagulls and geese. Seagulls are attracted to the *Cladophora* because of aquatic insects and crustaceans that are trapped in the mats. Additional gull droppings increase the amount of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria found in the beach environment. As *E. coli* is currently used to predict associated health risks to swimmers in recreational waters, more *E. coli* leads to more posted swimming advisories.



Research is underway in the Great Lakes to determine if *Cladophora* provides an environment that allows pathogenic bacteria to survive longer. Scientists are also studying the possibility that *Cladophora* mats increase *E. coli* numbers by acting as incubation sites.



amounts of it as a waste product. *Cladophora* grows along the lake bottom, often in close proximity to zebra and quagga mussels. This places it in a prime position to take up phosphorous released by the mussels. More phosphorous may lead to more *Cladophora* on your favorite beach.



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Lake Erie Office
Tom Ridge Environmental Center
301 Peninsula Dr., Suite 3
Erie, PA 16505
(814) 217-9017

Delaware Estuary Office
1350 Edgmont Avenue
Suite 2570
Chester, PA 19013
(215) 816-0894

A Phosphorous Link?

More abundant *Cladophora* has been associated with higher levels of available phosphorus. Factors that contribute to higher phosphorus levels include human waste, fertilizers, agricultural run-off, and detergents released into the water. Zebra and quagga mussels may also contribute to increased phosphorous levels because they release small

Avoiding *Cladophora*

Due to the large number of *E. coli* present in *Cladophora*, beach-goers should avoid it as much as possible. It is also recommended that children not play in or near *Cladophora* because they are at greater risk of ingesting bacteria that can make them ill.

References

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