



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lake Lanier algae levels highest in 20 years

Lake Lanier, Ga. – Data collected in 2019 has revealed that Lake Lanier contained its highest levels of algae, or chlorophyll, in 20 years.

Chlorophyll is the main indicator used to detect algae that blooms as result of excess nutrients flowing into the lake. Too much algae in the water can negatively affect water quality, impact taste and smell of drinking water even after treatment, raise the cost of treating to drinking water standards, and cause decreases in the oxygen that fish and other aquatic life need to survive.

Millions of people depend on Lake Lanier for water supply, flood protection and recreation. Lake Lanier also acts as a catch-all for pollution flowing from industrial facilities, agricultural operations, sewage treatment plants and stormwater runoff, all of which can contribute to elevated algal blooms.

“Our region’s prosperity depends on a healthy Lake Lanier,” said Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Headwaters Director, Dale Caldwell. “The high algae levels that we saw in 2019 indicate that we need to do a better job of controlling the amount of nutrients flowing into the lake.”

CRK has been testing chlorophyll levels at ten locations on Lake Lanier once a month between April and October since 2010, and monitors algal levels in accordance with a Sampling and Quality Assurance Plan approved by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). EPD also collects water samples and has been monitoring the lake since 2000.

Data collected by CRK is averaged with data collected by EPD and Gwinnett County’s Department of Water Resources. Between 2000 and 2018, these monitored chlorophyll levels only increased at an average of 0.17 ug/L per year. Between 2018 and 2019, however, the increase in ug/L was approximately 3.72.

Samples collected in recent years also exceeded the maximum level set by the state. As a result, EPD developed a federally required cleanup plan to target nutrient reductions in the Lanier watershed. The high levels recorded last year demonstrate the need to expedite the plan. CRK will

be advocating that lake stakeholders including local governments and utilities take appropriate actions to ensure swift implementation of the cleanup plan.

“This alarming spike in chlorophyll levels highlights the need for this cleanup plan,” said Jason Ulseth, Riverkeeper. “We will be doing everything we can to make sure that those who manage the sources of the excess nutrients flowing into Lake Lanier are taking action to address this public health threat as quickly as possible.”

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Chattahoochee Riverkeeper’s mission is to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee River, its lakes and tributaries for the people, fish and wildlife that depend upon it.

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