LAKE AGAWAM CONSERVANCY · NOVEMBER 2026

A New Hope

The 2026 water-quality report, and the work ahead for the lake.



Lake Agawam, Southampton.

HOW THE LAKE IS DOING

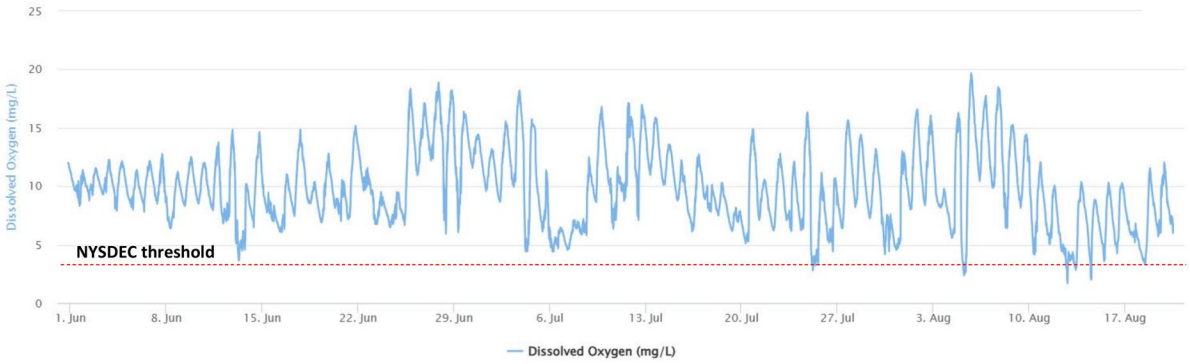
Conditions in Lake Agawam have been improving since 2018. In 2026, the lake was swimmable through June. Blue-green algae remain the problem to solve in summer. Most of the nitrogen entering the lake comes from wastewater, so replacing septic systems and sewering are the priorities. Diverting run-off has helped, and will keep improving water quality. And the new permeable reactive barrier is already removing 80% of the nitrogen running toward it.

THE 2026 NUMBERS

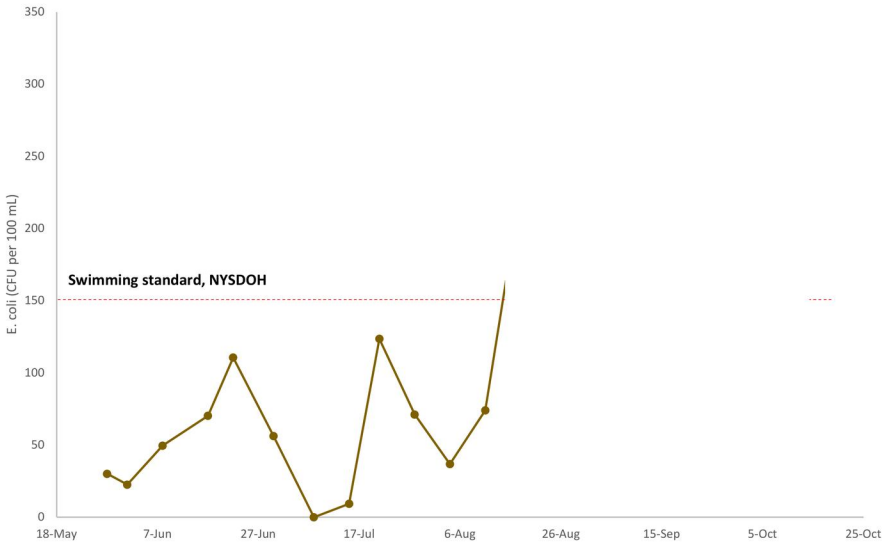
A new monitoring buoy, launched on the lake this year, now tracks conditions continuously. The Southampton Press called it an important first step.



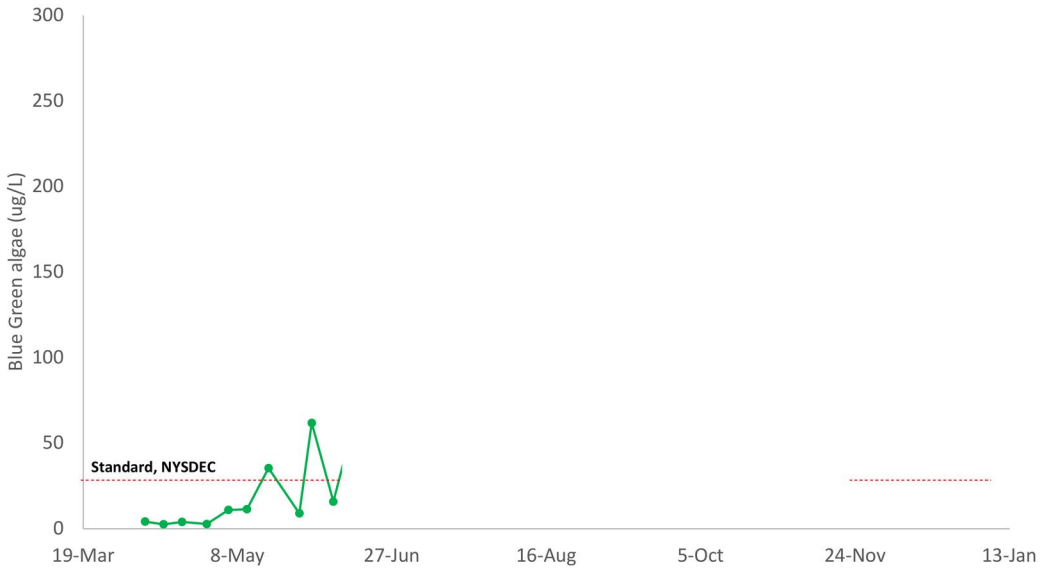
The Lake Agawam monitoring buoy.



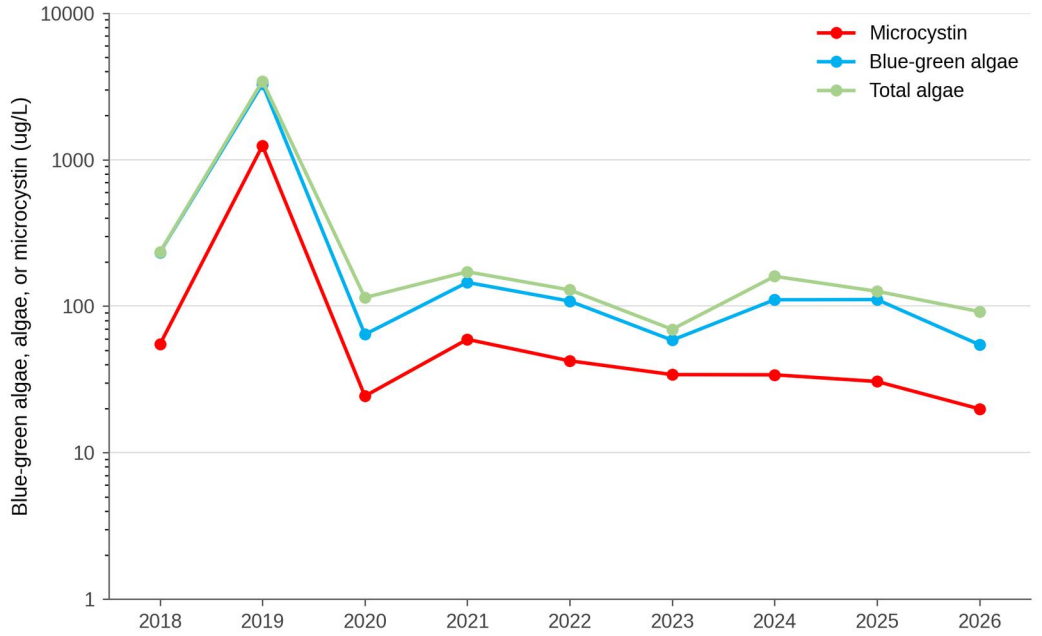
Dissolved oxygen, 2026. Levels held above the NYSDEC threshold for nearly the entire season.



E. coli, 2026. Counts stayed below the state swimming standard through June and most of the summer, breaching it only in August.



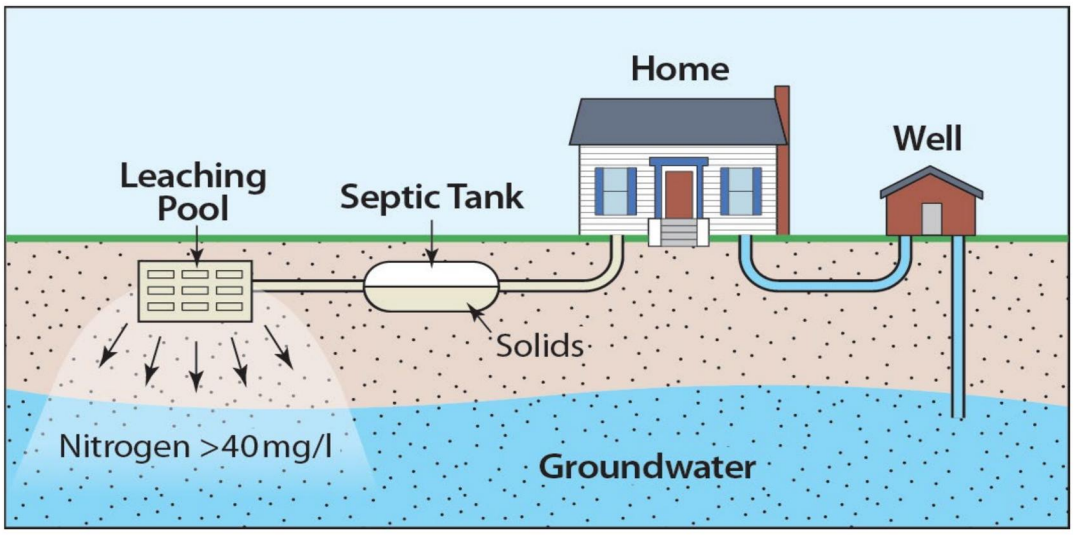
Blue-green algae, 2026. Levels stayed mostly below the NYSDEC standard, with a late-spring peak above it.



Trends since 2018. Blue-green algae, total algae and microcystin are all trending down.

WHERE THE NITROGEN COMES FROM

Most of the nitrogen entering the lake comes from wastewater. A conventional Suffolk County septic system discharges nitrogen at more than 40 mg/L into the groundwater that feeds the lake.



How a conventional system reaches the groundwater.

$65,000 FOR SEPTIC UPGRADES

There is no time to waste. Three programs now fund septic upgrades in Suffolk County: the County SIP, $20,000 (previously $10,000); the NYS Septic System Replacement Program, $25,000 (previously $10,000); and the Town Community Preservation Fund, $20,000 for Southampton and East Hampton.

That is $65,000 available to residents of Southampton. It is not taxable: free money. For most homes, it will cover the entire installation.

Six nitrogen-reducing systems now hold General Use or Provisional Approval in Suffolk County: Hydro-Action, Norweco Hydro-Kinetic, Fuji Clean, SeptiTech STAAR, Orenco Advantex AX-20, and the Nitrogen Reducing Biofilter, lined and boxed.

HELP WITH THE PAPERWORK

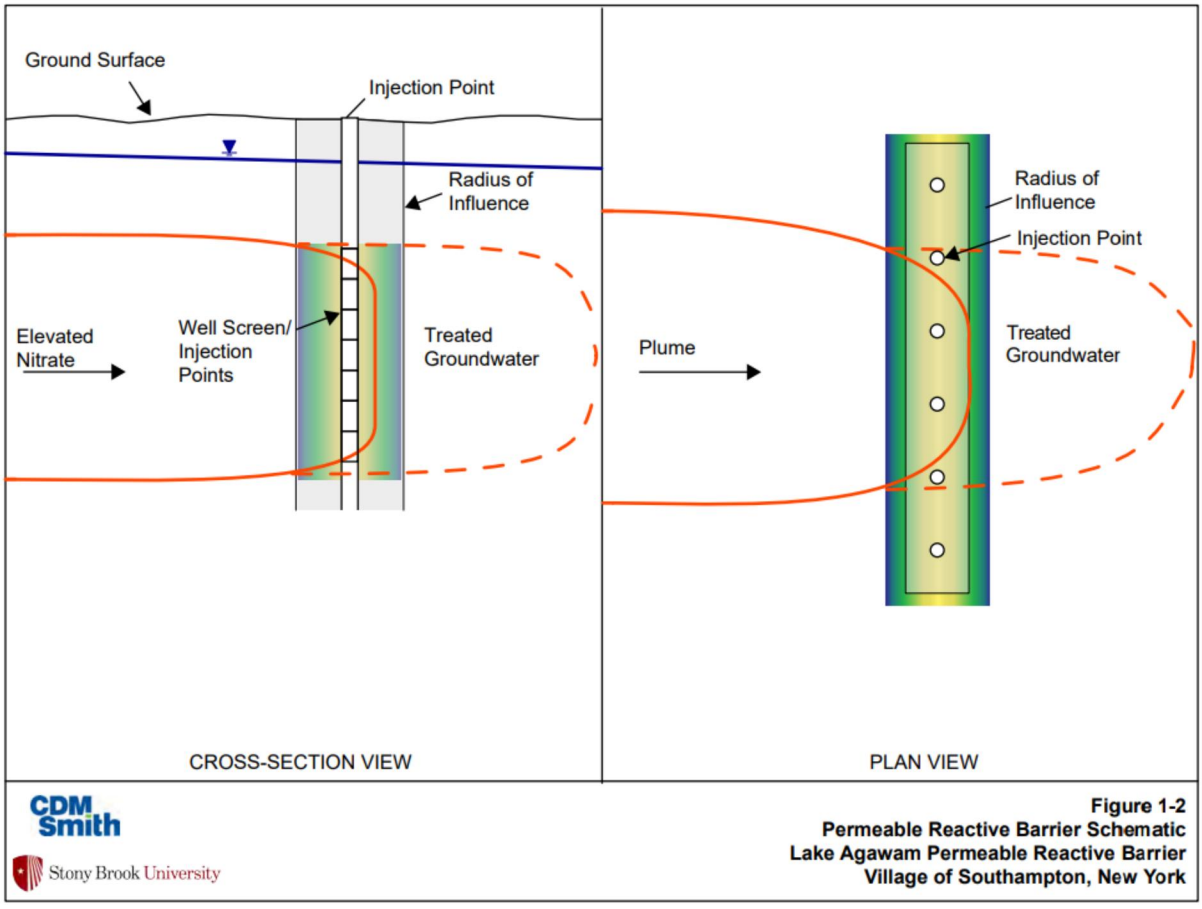
The Conservancy's watershed manager, Tom Varley, has 40 years of experience in wastewater treatment, specializing in operation and maintenance, and is a certified Grade 4 wastewater operator in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Tom is here to help you upgrade your septic system seamlessly: system selection, system design, obtaining grants, installation, and operation and maintenance.

THE WORK UNDER WAY

Sewering Main Street. A $10 million grant from the NYS Water Quality Improvement Program will bring sewers to 254 parcels on Main Street.

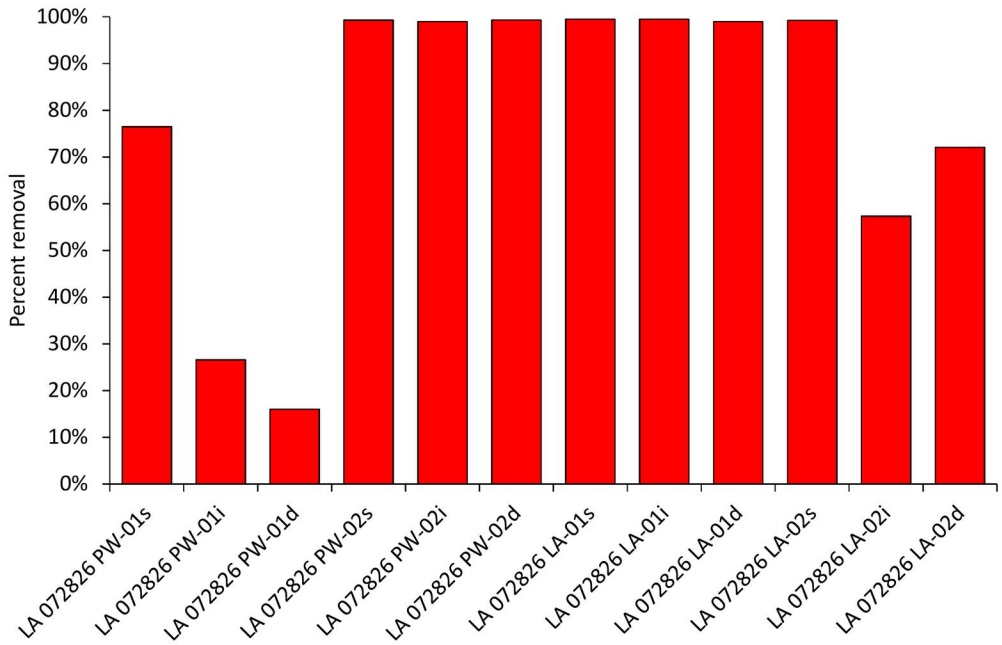
The permeable reactive barrier. The Town of Southampton CPF program has approved the injection-well PRB grant application. Between April 15 and May 1, 2026, crews injected EVO through 15 wells set 10 feet apart, through 6-foot screens, at flow rates of 0.24 to 12.50 gallons per minute (mean 6.8). In total, 50,115 gallons at 10.5 or 12.6% EVO. The first post-injection sampling followed on July 27, 2026.



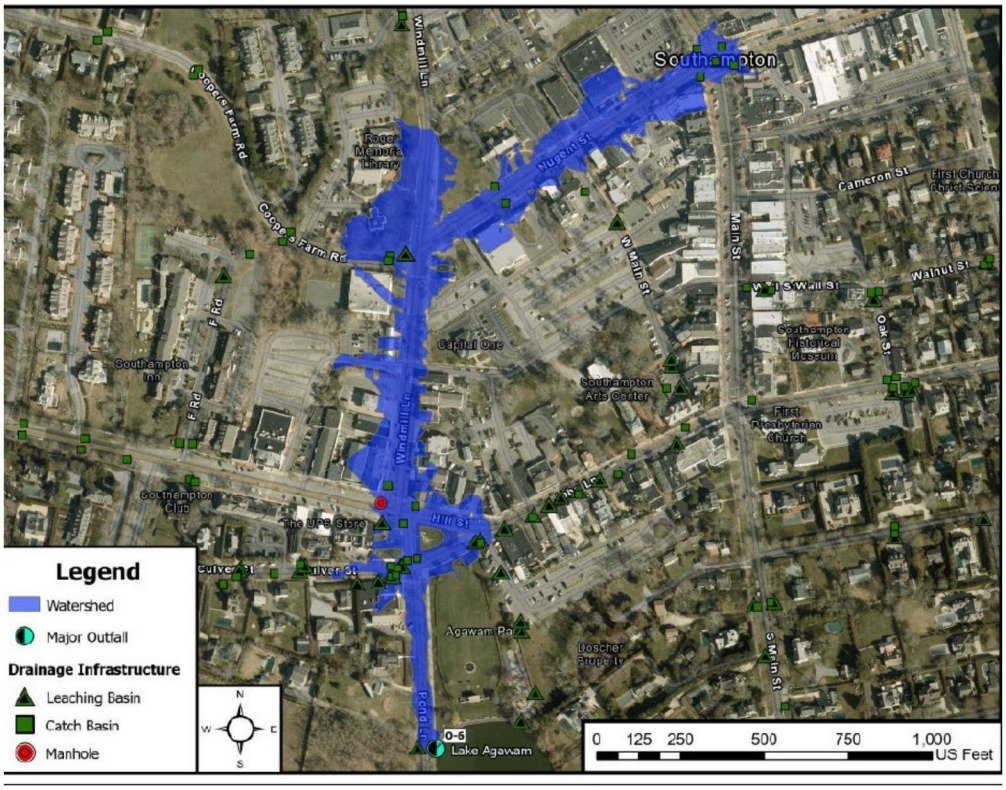
The injection-well permeable reactive barrier, in cross-section and plan view.



The EVO injection, April 2026.



Percent nitrogen removal across the barrier's wells. Most are at or near 100%, and the barrier as a whole is already removing 80% of the nitrogen running toward it.



The watershed area of the project, as estimated by Village Engineers LMKA.

Thank you for your attention, and for everything you do for the lake.

LAKE AGAWAM CONSERVANCY

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