

Noxious algae gone, but who knows how long

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Recent storms may have washed away algae blooms in a Florida chain of lakes, but experts said algae threats remain because of pollution feeding the lakes.

The blooms include potentially toxic forms of algae, the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel said Tuesday.

Experts said they don't know what triggers blue-green algae blooms and makes them persist for weeks. But they said conditions can be worsened by pollution flowing into lakes from area development, roads and storm water runoff.

Until recently, the algae blooms skipped most parts of the Clermont Chain of Lakes -- among more than 40 Outstanding Florida Waters that receive extra environmental protection because of their pristine quality.

The Lake County Water Authority reported algae blooms years ago on relatively tiny Lake Winona in the Clermont chain. But residents on several other lakes spotted the blooms on larger lakes beginning last year.

Water levels in the Clermont chain have fluctuated from drought-induced lows to high flood conditions in the past several years.

Algae-feeding phosphorus changed water quality. Over the last six years, median phosphorus levels in several lakes is nearly three times what had been during the previous 30 years, the water authority said.

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