**How are the lakes Minnesota?**

Minnesota may be the “Land of 10,000 Lakes,” but the quality of these lakes varies widely from one end of the state to the other.

In general, lakes in northeastern Minnesota are in good condition. The ecoregion is dominated by forests, wetlands and lakes, with very little farming or development, and 92% of the lakes meet water quality standards for swimming and recreation. The water is clear, algae blooms are almost non-existent, and few places have been infested by invasive species.

Meanwhile, in southern and western Minnesota, only 18% of the lakes are clean enough to swim in. Land that was once prairie has been converted to farmland, wetlands have been drained, and most farms use drain tile to quickly drain water out of the fields and into nearby waterways. Unlike the lakes up north, those in southern and western Minnesota are naturally shallow as well, so they are less resilient to pollution from excess sediment and nutrients.

In the metro, lake quality varies considerably. Deeper lakes fare better than shallow ones, and the lakes in less developed portions of the metro are doing better than those in urban and agricultural areas. About half of the metro area lakes are meeting water quality standards, while the other half suffer from algae blooms due to excess phosphorus. Invasive species are cropping up in many metro lakes because they are so heavily used. In addition, chloride levels from road salt are increasing in local lakes and streams and could become a major problem in the future.

The good news is that overall lake quality trends have stabilized over the past two decades, which means that most of the lakes in Minnesota are at least holding steady instead of getting worse. However, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency warns that, “Even if all existing laws were followed to the letter, lakes would still be subject to unacceptable levels of nutrients and other contaminants.” Furthermore, MPCA staff believe that voluntary projects alone will not be enough to protect and restore our beloved lakes. Restoring other damaged lakes in Minnesota will require targeted action, and, in some cases, new rules to address sources of pollution that are currently unregulated.

[Insert local lake info here.]

To learn more about the state of Minnesota’s lakes, go to: [www.pca.state.mn.us/water/state-lakes](https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/state-lakes).