

DEQ official said lake is safe for fishing, recreation

By Jan Schultz

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Enders Lake is one of 259 water bodies or streams in Nebraska that has been included in the latest Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) list of impaired waters.

However, an official in the water quality division at the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) tells area residents the designation will not affect swimming, fishing or recreational use of the lake, located on Highway 6/61 between Imperial and Wauneta.

There should be no concerns on use of Enders Lake, emphasized Marty Link of the DEQ.

Every two years, the DEQ samples water bodies around the state as a requirement of the federal Clean Water Act, and submits the information to the EPA.

Sometimes, the EPA will use the data collected by DEQ from as far back as 10 years when it releases its "impaired waters," Link said.

Link said the study determines if the water bodies have the preferred water quality levels for their determined uses—human recreation, ag water supply and maintaining healthy aquatic life, among others.

In Enders Lake's case, it was cited for having too high of levels of chlorophyll A, phosphorus and also included a "fish consumption advisory."

It also was listed in the 2008 review for chlorophyll A. Phosphorus and the "fish consumption advisory" were added in the 2010 review.

Link said the "fish consumption advisory" was given because in one of its water testings in recent years, a white bass pulled from Enders Lake had high levels of mercury.

However, Link said, a person would have to eat an 8 oz. white bass filet every week for about 70 years for it to be a health concern.

"Eating fish is a healthy choice," she said.

Enders Lake was also cited for the two chemicals because their levels were higher than preferred, but again, were no health hazard, she said.

Enders Lake is a water body from which drinking water is not taken. Those water bodies which do provide drinking water are scrutinized for other pollutants because of human consumption.

Several other area water bodies also made the 2010 list for various pollutants—Lake McConaughy, Harlan County Reservoir, Republican River, Frenchman Creek, Stinking Water Creek and Rock Creek Lake.

Link noted the list of impaired waters is also used to determine where the agencies put their dollars for water improvement projects.