Assessing Health of Filley Pond Using Biotic and Chemical Indicators

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Why Filley?

Once hailed as “Bloomfield’s Jewel,” Filley Park has been a hot spot for hiking, skating and fishing. Though over time, Filley Pond has become clogged with silt, endured the invasions of the European water chestnut and geese, and the park has suffered from litter and pollution. The town of Bloomfield is now launching a major restoration project, that includes the dredging of Filley Pond, removal of the dam and the installation of a rock ramp fish ladder in Wash Brook that bypasses the pond. This project is expected to decrease stagnation, mitigate pollution and increase the amount of nutrients in the water, improving suitability for life and even the possibility of introducing fish.

However, little up to date information is available on the health and water quality of Filley Pond and the Wash Brook. Gathering data using biotic and chemical indicators before and after this restoration will provide valuable information about the success of this project in restoring the health of the Filley Pond ecosystem. The objective of this investigation is to collect macroinvertebrates and perform different water chemistry tests to assess the health of Filley Pond and the Wash Brook ahead of the restoration.

Water Chemistry/Quality Tests: Materials and Methods

Chemical water tests can indicate a variety of characteristics in a system, from the presence of unwanted ions (TDS/conductivity) to suitability for certain plant and animal life (dissolved oxygen, pH).

- Water samples were collected at sites 1, 2, 3 and 5 on 10/16/17 and 11/21/17 and data was recorded
- Data was collected using the Urbante Meter at four sites in Wash Brook

Equipment: Urbante meter; nitrate strip kit; pH strip kit; phosphate ampoule kit; dissolved oxygen ampoule kit

Results

- Average total number of Least Sensitive individuals more than triples the average total number of Moderately Sensitive individuals
- No macroinvertebrates of the Most Sensitive category found at any location
- Average recorded water temperature was 16.3 °C
- Highest conductivity and TDS was recorded downstream at the location closest to the storm drain (Site 1)
- No amount of phosphate, nitrite or nitrate was traceable; dissolved oxygen remained mainly consistent, averaging at 7 PPM; the pH averaged at 7

Macroinvertebrate Collection

Different macroinvertebrates have different tolerances for pollution and other stream conditions. Macroinvertebrates with higher sensitivity (i.e. Mayflies, stoneflies) indicate better water quality, while those with lower sensitivity (i.e. Leeches, sow bugs) indicate the opposite.

- Samples collected in Wash Brook at sites 1-4 (Fig A) on 10/15/17 and 10/16/17
- Equipment: Ice cube trays; scrub brush; forceps; D-net; waders
- Macroinvertebrates were dislodged via manual disruption of silt/rocks, dirt or removed with brushes
- Specimens were collected with D-net and visually identified using DEEP identification cards

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my community partner, Jonathan Thiesse, the Bloomfield CEEC and David Hager for the advice and guidance they gave me. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Abby Beissinger and all the faculty at the NRCA program, without whom this project wouldn’t have been possible. And lastly, I’d like to thank my parents for the help and support that was vital for my project’s success.

References

   https://www.vertexwaterfeatures.com/pond-lake-water-chemistry/

   <http://www.lakeaccess.org/ecology/lakeecologyprim15.html>

Conclusions

- No highly sensitive individuals were identified in Wash Brook at sites within the vicinity of Filley Pond; the absence of these individuals, which serve as bioindicators of good water quality, and the recorded presence of only moderately and minimally sensitive individuals shows that the water quality of Wash Brook within the vicinity of Filley Pond is poor.
- Conductivity & TDS peaked at Site 1, likely because it was located near a storm drain. This finding indicates the presence of runoff that likely contained road salts or other pollutants. Overall, the levels of conductivity/TDS determined at Site 2,3 and 5 would be considered moderate or normal for a freshwater river¹.
- The absence of measurable nitrates/nitrates or phosphates and the average pH and DO levels; Filley Pond could be classified as an oligotrophic system, which would indicate that it has low plant nutrients and limited to good sustainability for activity/growth².

Further Research

This project establishes a baseline for further investigation into the health of Filley Pond and the water quality improvements after restoration, and provides information necessary for determining the successfulness of the restoration project. Taking steps to provide information about Filley Pond and Wash Brook is vital to restore and protect the park’s ecosystems, and polish a jewel that should once again be a pillar in the Bloomfield community.