Report to White Lake Town Board
November 2026
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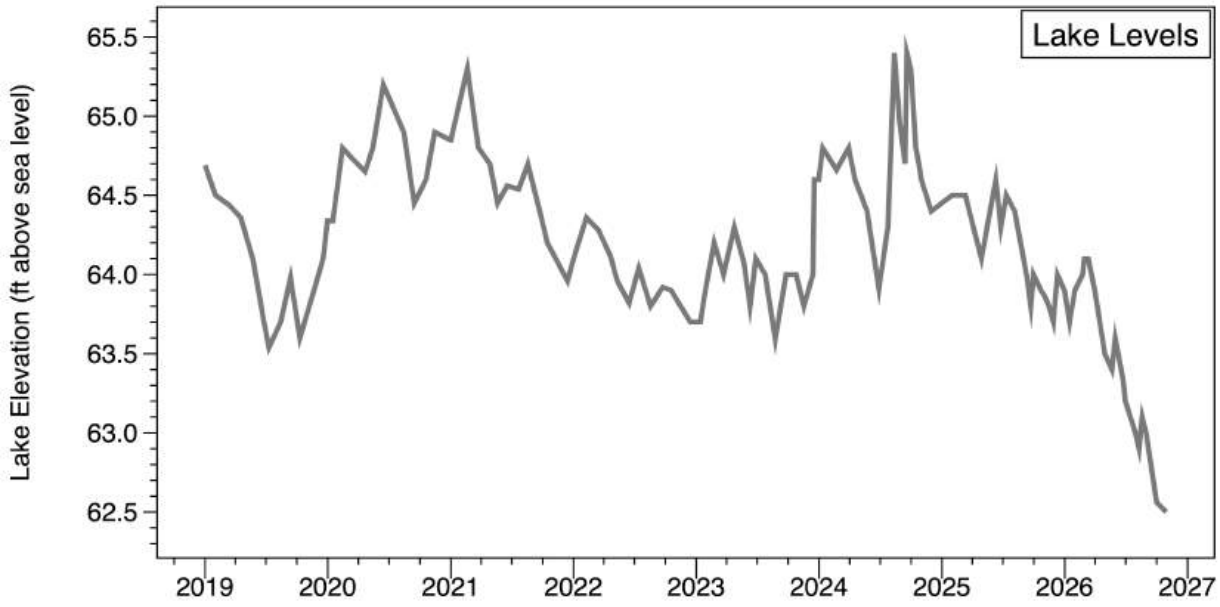
The lake level is at the bottom of the gauge at Turtle Cove, at 62.5 feet NAVD 88, which is slightly lower than the low last month. While a total of 3.6 inches of rain fell in October, small rainfall events (0.1-0.2 inches) dominated, and these do not recharge the lake. A rain gauge and lake level gauge have been installed and are recording data, including water temperatures and air temperatures.





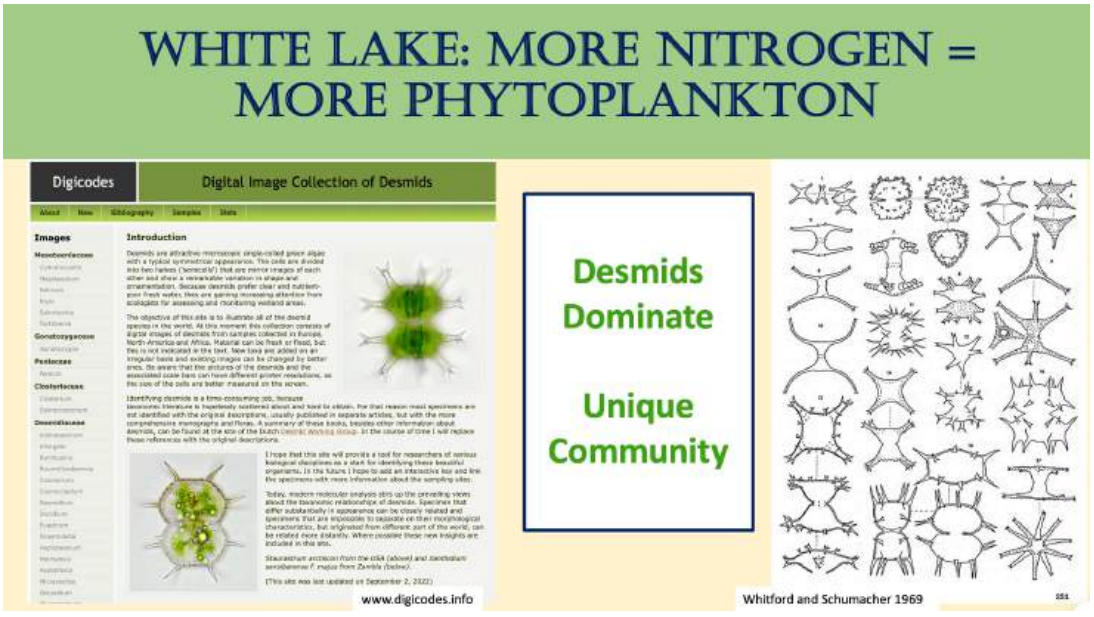
Monthly Rainfall (inches) for White Lake 2012-2026

Month	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2013	2012	Monthly Average for Region
January	2.4	2.5	2.75	4.3	5.75	8.25	4.5	2.75	4.20	7.0	3.0	2.5	1.75	2.75	3.81
February	2.8*	2.6	2.5	3.6	1.0	9.2	6.7	2.25	2.00	1.5	10.7	5.5	2.5	4.0	3.44
March	1.4	2.6	5.0	2.5	2.45	2.7	3.7	3.25	3.95	3.7	1.55	4.15	1.0	7.0	3.91
April	1.1	1.4	1.75	8.5	3.75	1.75	5.1	7.25	6.75	6.75	6.75	4.55	1.75	2.25	3.12
May	5.1	7.5	2.3	1.5	2.2	3.0	12.25	1.20	7.70	2.7	4.5	4.20	2.25	9.25	3.67
June	2.2	6.15	1.5	6.3	6.2	7.9	7.15	5.25	10.00	4.5	3.65	8.70	17.0	2.0	4.70
July	5.25	7.15	9.5	3.8	10.5	7.5	6.85	6.00	4.75	6.75	3.75	3.0	11.25	8.6	5.75
August	5.9	3.8	21.6	7.5	5.5	6.5	7.55	5.35	6.25	5.6	4.12	9.4	8.25	9.75	5.95
September	0.5	2.7	15.4	3.05	6.5	3.2	5.95	5.00	29.45	5.2	15.0	4.7	1.0	5.0	5.29
October	3.6	1.9	0.0	1.75	0.6	0.6	3.35	3.60	2.25	2.95	14.25	9.75	1.75	2.25	3.38
November		0.7	1.0	3.25	1.55	0.4	7.5	4.90	4.25	1.0	0.50	7.25	0	2.25	3.16
December		3.8	2.3	8.5	1.2	3.4	4.25	6.00	7.5	5.45	5.1	6.5	5.75	4.25	3.14
Total		**42.8**	**65.6**	**54.55**	**47.2**	**54.4**	**74.85**	**52.80**	**89.05**	**53.1**	**72.87**	**70.20**	**54.25**	**59.35**	**49.32**
% of Lake Volume		**56**	**85.9**	**71.4**	**61.8**	**71**	**97**	**69**	**116**	**69**	**95**	**91**	**70**	**77**	**64**

*6-8" Snow on 1/31-2/1, equivalent to about 0.5 " rain

Opinions abound regarding the need to restore lake levels, although a recent proposal would **remove** 10% of the lake volume to create a retention basin for aquatic plants. Extreme and unrealistic notions continue to be generated, it seems.

There is a phytoplankton bloom underway in the lake, and the dominant species is a small desmid—a type of green algae that is characteristic of low-nutrient acidic waters. Recent experience at the lake indicates that desmid blooms (such as the one in early 2021) will eventually crash, although we are in uncharted territory now with the exceedingly low lake levels (and stirring up of nutrient rich bottom sediments). Close monitoring through the winter, when rains may be heavy, will follow nutrient levels (which are relatively high now) and the abundance of dominant desmids. These tiny cells have a relatively high surface area to volume ratio, so can rapidly take up nutrients, especially by comparison to things like rooted aquatic plants.



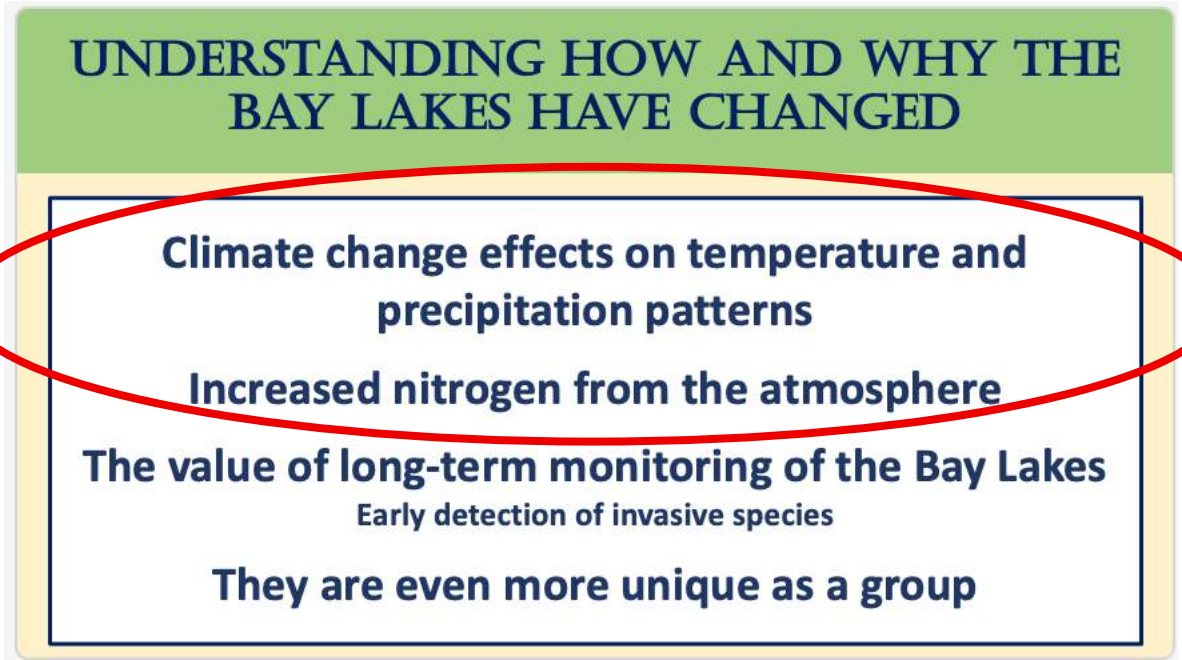
In addition to the planktonic productivity, there is a lot going on at the lake bottom, which in most places (past the no wake zone) is less than six feet from the lake surface. I have been sharing photos of the "green balls" that are stirred up by wave action and wash ashore; for the first time, I noticed them at the lake gauge shoreline. These are balls of gelatinous mucus with tiny cyanobacterial cells embedded (they are green when the cells are living and yellow after cell death).



These cyanobacterial colonies can outcompete the aquatic vegetation that has been seen in the deeper portions of the lake in the past, and just one type of vegetation is seen in sandy shallow areas of the lake: a diminutive, grass-like plant called dwarf milfoil.

Lake levels are very low at the other Bay Lakes, and at Jones Lake, the dark water is less dark and planktonic productivity (chlorophyll *a* level) is elevated. At Lake Waccamaw, little to no swamp water is entering the lake, so it is very clear, and bottom vegetation is very abundant. There is a filamentous cyanobacterial species which is very abundant in nearshore areas—it has also been seen in the past when the lake was clear.





It is not just more nitrogen which has an impact on the Bay Lakes; it is also changes in weather patterns—higher temperatures can stimulate productivity, while extreme precipitation and extreme droughts can also play a large role.