

Upper French River Cottagers' Association (UFRCA) Water Testing & Monitoring Update

NOVEMBER 25, 2024

UFRCA's Environmental Commitment: climate change and chemical contamination pose risks to the quality of our natural resources, including fresh water. Our Environmental Committee is dedicated to monitoring water quality and the preservation of wildlife, lands, and forests. We work closely with the Dokis First Nation and local communities and partners to promote the healthy recreational use of the French River and Lake Nipissing. UFRCA encourages ongoing clean-ups of waste or plastics on land or in the water. UFRCA shares its information on water quality, wildfires, or other weather hazards and works to mobilize efforts to safeguard the natural beauty and health of the French River.

The Environmental Committee of the UFRCA initiated water testing in the summer of 2024 with Water Rangers, and volunteer water testing on the French River is now expanding with the Lake Partner Program (LPP) in 2025. Below is information on citizens-science water testing methods available to UFRCA members: **FOCA's Lake Partner Program (LPP)** and **Water Rangers (WR)**. Also provided below is information on **blue green algae**.

LAKE PARTNER PROGRAM (LPP) – A Joint Program with FOCA

A water-testing program that measures water quality in inland lakes and rivers across Ontario, the **Lake Partner Program (LPP)** is administered jointly by the Ontario Ministry of Environment and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA). LPP enables citizens to conduct water testing that targets deeper areas of a river or lake, so it is complementary to Water Rangers' near-shore water testing. LPP tests for **water clarity (Secchi disc), calcium (deforestation or acid rain impacts), fluoride (often from road salts), and phosphorous (triggers blue green algae)**. LPP samples must be refrigerated until mailed via Canada Post in pre-paid boxes. While LPP tests submitted in May or June are normally finished at the end of the calendar year, these results may not be posted publicly by the Ministry for one year or longer. The LPP test kit is free: LPP water testers only need to provide basic rope and transport the samples to a mailbox.

Interested in becoming an LPP tester? Read on! Our goal is to involve 10% of our UFRCA membership (8-10 people) in 2025. To request a free LPP test kit, please see the information below. Ideally, you should order your kit by the end of December to be eligible for LPP testing in May or June 2025, the prime LPP test period. To watch a video on the LPP testing process, please visit <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program/>

LPP collects surface water samples in deeper areas of a given lake or river, instead of end-of-dock or shoreline sampling common with Water Rangers. LPP testers must have access to a boat, and the only costs associated with being an LPP volunteer is a simple rope for sampling. To be an LPP tester, you must contact the LPP/FOCA with your mailing address (Canada or US), contact information, and the area of the river or lake you can sample. **For those interested in being a volunteer tester in the LPP, please email the LPP lakepartner@ontario.ca.** LPP will then contact the potential volunteer, organize your sampling location and provide introductory information. LPP sampling kits will be mailed in late winter of 2025. LPP water samples are typically taken in May or June, with monthly Secchi depth readings from there on, but monthly water samples can be arranged if desired.

WATER RANGERS – Canadian Non-Profit, Citizen Science Water Testing

A Canadian non-profit focused on inspiring the public to get involved by collecting water data from local rivers and lakes, Water Rangers (WR) enables near-shore testing of water, including data on **Water Temperature, Conductivity, Dissolved Oxygen, Chlorine, pH, Alkalinity, Hardness, Clarity and Depth (Secchi Disc)**. WR also gathers observations, such as debris on the water, evidence of boating, swimming, or fishing, observed algae, water flow, color, clarity and odor. WR does not test for blue green algae, e-coli, or giardia. WR test results are recorded in the field in a booklet, then uploaded via a free WR app or on the WR website. An internet or cellphone connection is required to upload the WR data from your cottage. These data are verified for accuracy then shared publicly by WR, normally within 48 hours. Each Water Rangers test kit costs Cdn\$380 (US\$272) plus certain test elements (test strips) may need to be replenished between \$20 and \$100. While the cost may appear high for an individual cottager, families, fishing lodges or cottagers sharing a common location may consider it cost-effective way to test and monitor water quality in a matter of days. WR water testing occurs on the last Sunday (or within a few days) of each month.

2024 WR TEST RESULTS

Between June and September 2024, a volunteer three-person WR team of Liliane Murdoch, Tim Murdoch, and Pascale Lemaire performed 30 different WR tests across 11 locations over four days from Lake Nipissing down the Upper French River to the mouth of the “Little French.” Here are the [2024 Water Rangers water-test results](https://app.waterrangers.ca/groups/upper-french-river-lake-nipissing-the-french-river): <https://app.waterrangers.ca/groups/upper-french-river-lake-nipissing-the-french-river>

Until December 31st Water Rangers has a pre-2025 sale on test kits at a 15% discount: <https://waterrangers.com/2024/11/06/our-presale-is-back-15-off-for-the-2025-testing-season/?v=5435c69ed3bc>

For more information on using WR testing kits, please visit these sites.

<https://waterrangers.com/product/freshwater-explorer-testkit/?v=5435c69ed3bc>
<https://www.waterrangers.ca/test/protocol/plan/>

Eleven-minute “how-to” video from the WR training page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXbIW8aPLrk>

BLUE GREEN ALGAE

Blue green algae are becoming more prevalent. To learn more about blue algae, here are two links for insights: <https://waterrangers.com/testkits/tests/what-is-cyanobacteria/?v=5435c69ed3bc>
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/blue-green-algae>

Timely reporting of blue green algae is essential. The [Contact Us](#) and [What to Do if you See a Blue Algae Bloom pages](#) on the Ontario site above provide useful information, a phone number and web-reporting alternatives. The French River Stewardship Council has shared information with the UFRCA on their experiences with blue algae on the Lower French. Information on what happens when a blue algae bloom is identified can be found on the Ontario website above. The UFRCA will continue to gather information on blue algae to educate and inform our membership, plus share information with the French River Stewardship Council.

***DISCLAIMER:** The Upper French River Cottagers Association (UFRCA) is not affiliated with or representing Water Rangers or the Lake Partner Program (LPP). We are sharing publicly available information about these popular water-testing initiatives as part of our commitment to raising awareness about water quality, a key priority for the Upper French River. The UFRCA does not assess, verify, or judge the water test results produced by either program. Our role is solely to provide information to our members for educational purposes. For specific inquiries or further details about these programs, we encourage members to contact the respective organizations directly. This disclaimer ensures transparency and clarity regarding UFRCA's role in disseminating water quality information.*