

CAPITOL LAKE  
THE HEALTHIEST LAKE IN THURSTON COUNTY  
Executive Summary

**Capitol Lake is the healthiest lake in Thurston County.**

This report describes Lake features that show it to be a robust, valuable asset to our community, and some factors that have created a negative- but mistaken public impression that the Lake is impaired.

- Capitol Lake has high dissolved oxygen levels in its deepest waters all year long, no toxic blue green algae blooms, and clean water that has met bacteriological and other standards for swimming since 2000. *No other monitored Thurston County lake has all of these positive features.*
- Capitol Lake (like seven other local lakes, several sites in Budd Inlet, and sites in some rivers) is listed in violation of EPA Clean Water Act Section 303(d). One reason for this (bacterial levels) has been corrected, the other (phosphorus) can only be corrected by changes in upland land use.
- Capitol Lake has met water quality standards for swimming during the last 15 years.
- Capitol Lake provides extensive habitat for native aquatic species that are “sensitive”- (Olympic Mudminnows) or vulnerable to habitat loss (freshwater mussels) elsewhere in the state and region.
- By its suitability for emergent aquatic insects, Capitol Lake supports some 3000 bats from one of the biggest bat colonies in Washington State.
- If an estuary were to replace the Lake, the estuary would probably support more non-native introduced species than does the Lake at present.
- Capitol Lake takes up most of the inorganic nutrient nitrogen carried seaward by the Deschutes River every summer and prevents it from entering Puget Sound during the growing season.
- The Lake is being ecologically damaged by drawdowns that prevent succession of a mature freshwater community of native species that could control New Zealand Mud Snails.
- The reputation of the Lake has been clouded by alarmist signs, closures, and actions focused on New Zealand Mud Snails; trash-strewn shores; mats of plants floating at the surface; systematic omission of positive Lake news in news media; selectively negative agency reporting, managerial neglect, and memories of the Lake’s polluted past.
- All of these negative issues are reversible, some of them easily.

**In summary, Capitol Lake is a healthy and valuable environmental asset to the Deschutes watershed, to our community, and to the adjacent waters of Puget Sound.**