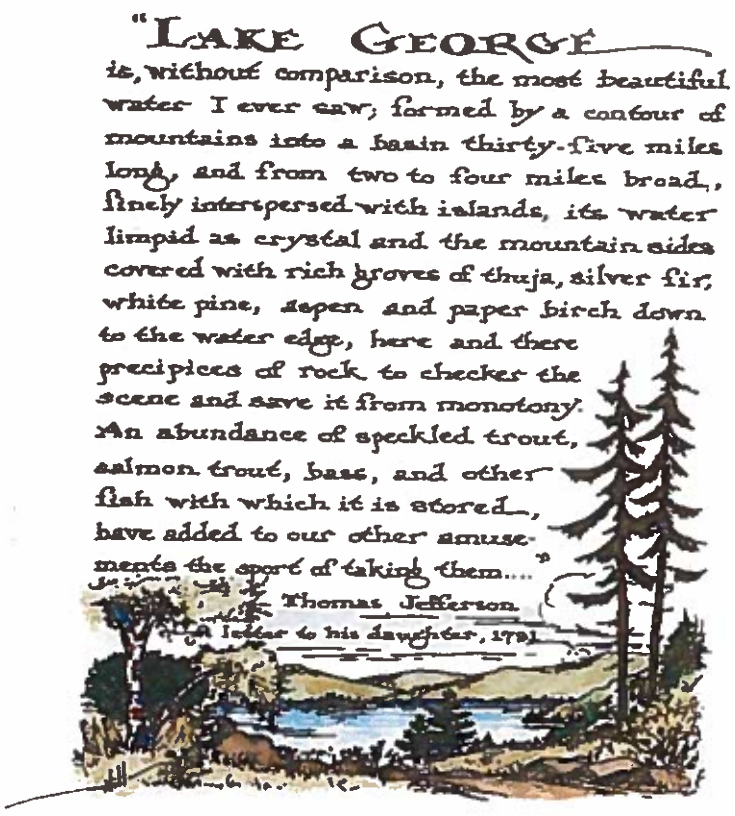
Presentation

To

NYS Senate Finance Committee/NYS Assembly Ways & Means Committee

Joint Legislative Budget Hearing

February 13, 2017



Lake George Watershed Coalition Delegation

Honorable Robert Blais	Mayor, Village of Lake George (Continuous from 1971 Election)
Honorable Ronald Conover	Chairman, Warren County Board of Supervisors Supervisor, Town of Bolton Chair, Executive Committee, LGWC
David Harrington	Superintendent, LG Dept of Public Works Chair, LGWC Projects Review & Oversight
Matt Fuller, Esq.	Village Attorney Meyer & Fuller, PLLC
David J. Decker, PE, CPESC	Director, Lake George Watershed Coalition

We are here today seeking your support in the Lake George Village's plans to construct a new Wastewater Treatment Plant that services the entire southern basin of Lake George, as core project of the Lake George Nutrient Reduction Initiative.

Our current plant, constructed in 1930, is presently under a Consent Order by DEC to correct deficiencies that could be harmful to our pristine lake and our entire region's economy. Lake George, arguably one of New York State's premier family tourist destinations, is the magnet that attracts visitors from all over the world, generating millions of dollars in revenue for our Local, County and State coffers.

Our needs are entirely unique, as our small village, with a population of less than 1,000, plays host to over 40,000 inhabitants on a daily basis during our summer season. Over 2,800 rooms, 1,500 homes, 560 businesses, two State campgrounds and the popular Million Dollar Beach are all serviced by our antiquated Treatment Plant.

Estimated to cost approximately $17M, bonding alone would exceed our Constitutional Debt Limit, raise property taxes by over 71% and create a severe financial hardship to the lake region.

Lake George is the water we all drink, the gifted natural resource that attracts tourists, residents and the associated economic development. Just last year two new hotels created over 60 new year-round jobs and another 74 seasonal opportunities.

In 1971, my first year in office, the Department of Environmental Conservation approached the Village asking that we accept wastewater from their failing system at Hearthstone Park campsite, over three miles away! We were there then for the State and supported the need as requested.

Now, we need your assistance as a partner in 2017 or over the next three years, as we not only seek to comply with the Consent Order, but protect Lake George for the next 100 years with a new Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The "Queen of America's Lakes" deserves nothing less.

Mayor Robert M. Blais 1971-

The Lake George Watershed Coalition

The Lake George Watershed Coalition ("*LGWC*"), formerly known as the Lake George Watershed Conference was formed in 2001, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to involve the municipalities, lake based organizations, and state agencies involved in this plan (***The Lake George Plan for the Future"***) update and responsible for its implementation.

The twenty five (25) members of the Coalition include:

- ✓ Village of Lake George
- ✓ Eight (8)Towns of Lake George, Bolton, Hague, Ticonderoga, Putnam, Dresden, Ft Ann and Queensbury
- ✓ The Three (3) Counties of Warren, Essex and Washington
- ✓ Four (4) NYS Departments of: State, Transportation, & Environmental Conservation
- ✓ The Lake George Park Commission
- ✓ The Adirondack Park Agency
- ✓ The Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board
- ✓ The Soil & Water Conservation Districts of: Warren, Essex and Washington Counties
- ✓ Cornell Cooperative Extension of Warren County
- ✓ The Fund for Lake George
- ✓ The Lake George Association
- ✓ The Lake George Land Conservancy

The Chair of the Coalition is the NYS Secretary of State

LAKE GEORGE
WATERSHED
CONFERENCE
Protection · Preservation · Participation

Leaders throughout history have recognized the natural beauty and intrinsic value of Lake George.

From Thomas Jefferson to Governor Cuomo, there has been a consistency in recognition of protection and preservation of natural resources as a core value. As reported in the Governor's State of the State message, "The State's record investments in tourism are paying dividends; the industry's total economic impact grew to a record high of $102 billion, an increase of more than 25 percent since 2010".

Our message today is focused on conveying to this committee the importance of Tourism as the economic and quality of life blood of the north country, and in particular to the Lake George Watershed Communities.

Aside from how we value the lake for its majesty, recreational and historic significance, the waters also serve as the primary drinking water source for not only permanent residents as well as the hundreds of thousands of visitors and vacationers that recognize the lake as their multi season destination.

Lake George is classified as a AA-Special waterbody. New York State regulations define AA-Special as follows:

- Class AA-Special waters are best used as a source of water supply for drinking, culinary or food processing purposes; primary and secondary contact recreation; and fishing. The waters shall be suitable for fish, shellfish, and wildlife propagation and survival.
- These waters shall contain no floating solids, settleable solids, oil, sludge deposits, toxic wastes, deleterious substances, colored or other wastes or heated liquids attributable to sewage, industrial wastes or other wastes.
- There shall be no discharge or disposal of sewage, industrial wastes or other wastes into these waters.
- These waters shall contain no phosphorus and nitrogen in amounts that will result in growths of algae, weeds and slimes that will impair the waters for their best usages.
- There shall be no alteration to flow that will impair the waters for their best usages.
- There shall be no increase in turbidity that will cause a substantial visible contrast to natural conditions.

We are proud and reverent of this natural wonder that we have the opportunity to be stewards of.

We are here today to apprise you of the fact there is the "proverbial canary in the coal mine", that is beginning to sing.

We have prepared and attached as part of our message a few graphics that support this notion. The lake has been tested, poked and examined in great depth for the last 40 years. The graphics attached are based on these forty years of water quality data and history.

Tab A – Tripling of Chloride and Sodium Levels since monitoring began in 1980.

Tab B - Migration of Chloride Concentrations "north to south" by decade since the 1980's

Tab C – Migration of presence of Chlorophyll "north to south" by decade since the 1980's

Tab C – Photo log (underwater) documenting the increasing presence of algal blooms in various bays

What is the message?

The good news is....The Lake remains one of the purest water bodies in the State. The bad news is this fact may have lulled the consuming public into a state of complacency.

We are mistakenly making use of the assimilative capacity of the lake to "consume" or "digest" what increased activity has generated through various sources of non-point pollution.

These sources of nutrients are, in effect, unknowingly, performing a "titration" of the lake's waters and unwittingly heading toward a point in the future...when this natural capacity may be no more.

We are seeing signs of this digression even now....

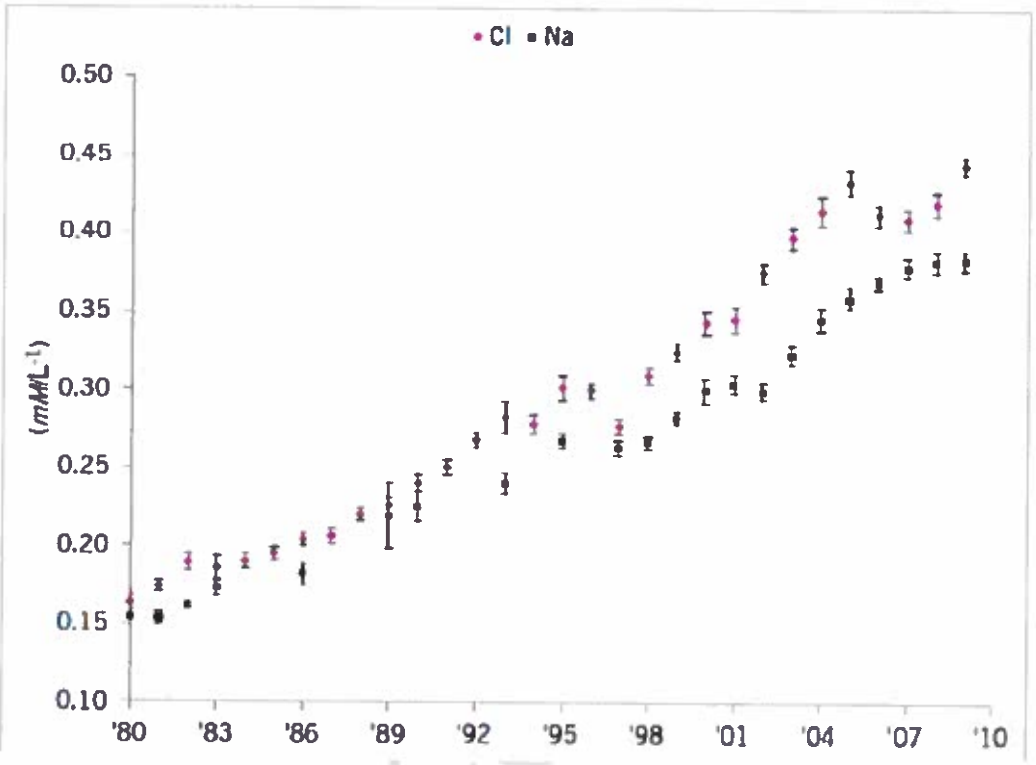
> Algal blooms that would not exist, save for the increased levels of nutrients in the lake that they need for propagation.
>
> Increased proclivity of the waters to "host" populations of invasive species that may not exist, save for the increased levels of nutrients into the lake.
>
> Alarming areas of total oxygen depletion, so-called "dead zones" in the south basin, on an annual basis, coincident with accumulating concentrations of phosphorous and nitrogen in bottom sediments

As stewards of this natural resource and economic asset of statewide import, it is important we take a proactive stance in pursuing what one might refer to as a "prevent defense" as opposed to being reactive , after-the-fact. To steal from an old adage, it is prudent to expend an ounce of prevention...rather than later, a pound, (or in this case a ton) of cure. The LGWC in general and the Village specifically is looking for a partnership with the state in direct support of the comprehensive Lake George Nutrient Reduction Initiative ("LGNRI"). That initiative, endorsed by the Capital Region Economic Development Council , ("CREDC") will pre-emptively attack the challenges of declining water quality by:

- ✓ Upgrade of technically deficient and decade-old POTW's
- ✓ Reduction of the use of conventional road salts on watershed roads
- ✓ Upgrade of decade old, substandard on-site septic disposal systems, 7500 in number
- ✓ Introduction of storm water and stream corridor BMP's along local, county and state roads

STATE OF THE LAKE

Sodium and Chloride Levels have tripled



THE FUND for LAKE GEORGE

LAKE·GEORGE WATERKEEPER

AVERAGE CHLOROPHYLL CONCENTRATIONS BY DECADE AND SUB-BASIN 1980-2009

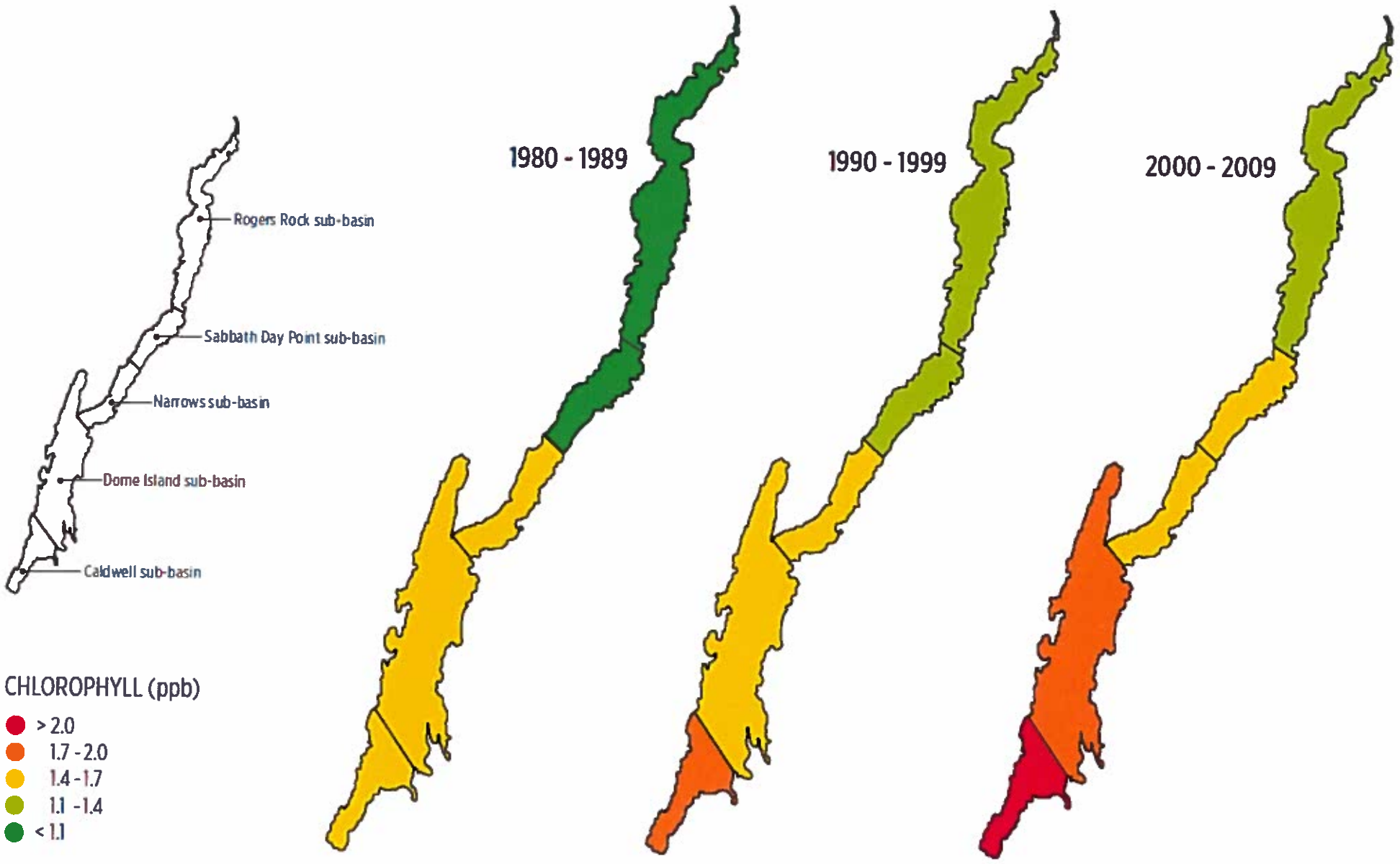


Figure 1. The average lakewide chlorophyll concentration compiled by decade in each of the 5 sub-basins of Lake George. An overall pattern of increasing chlorophyll concentrations is evident.

AVERAGE CHLORIDE CONCENTRATIONS BY DECADE AND SUB-BASIN 1980-2009

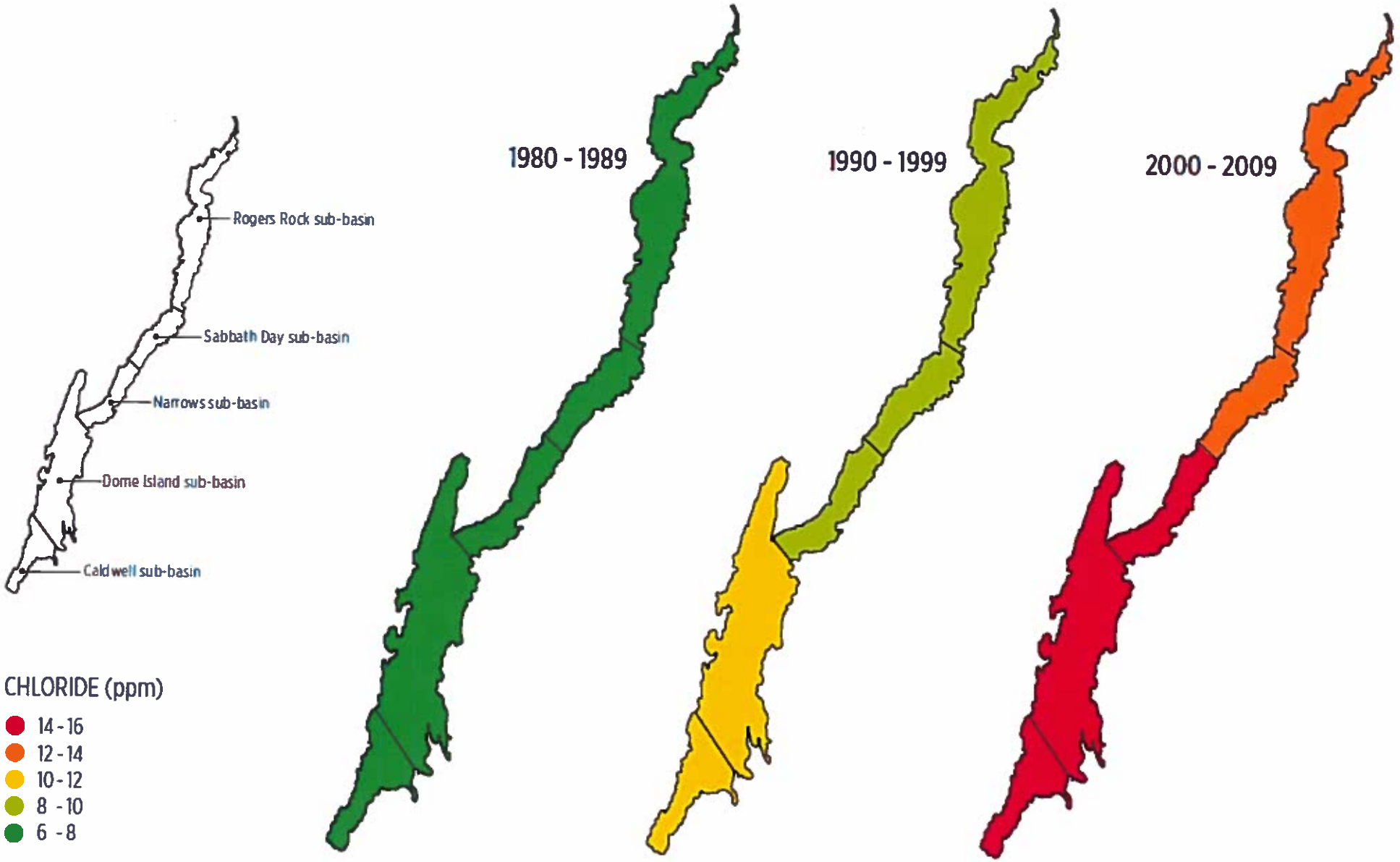


Figure 2. Chloride concentrations in Lake George have increased significantly between 1980 and 2009. The heaviest loading is in the southern sub-basins.

Healthy lake bottom

LG Bays are becoming with laden with algae

Healthy native plant growth

Native plants covered in algae displaying an overabundance of nutrients