

The Future of VOIT POND

Where is Voit Pond?

Voit Pond sits along the east branch of Starkweather Creek, near the intersection of Highway 30 and N. Fair Oaks on Madison's east side near Woodmans. It can be seen as a large blue dot on most maps and satellite images of Madison. The pond sits on the property of the Voit family, which is soon to be acquired by the City of Madison and being [considered](#) for future housing, commercial and green space development.



Voit Pond, a permanent water body, has good water clarity, water flow, and is a home to fish, aquatic plants and insects, and many migrating birds. The neighborhoods nearest Voit have high concentrations of families of color, and folks living with lower incomes and in multifamily residences—people who would benefit greatly from closer access to water and additional green space.

What is the Phosphorus Coagulation Project?

The City is [proposing](#) to use Voit Pond as part of a project to capture phosphorus and other pollutants in Starkweather Creek. The east branch of Starkweather Creek is urbanized and industrialized and the creek carries metals, PAHs, oil and grease, and some phosphorus.

The city proposes to intermittently divert a portion of the Creek into Voit Pond during storm events where stormwater will be “clarified” by adding liquid “reactive flocculants” (aluminum compounds). The floc binds to the phosphorus and most other pollutants and settles to the bottom of the pond, from where it must be later dredged and disposed.

Projected costs are **upwards of \$13 million** over a 20 year period (land, capital, and operation & maintenance). According to the city, the project by itself will reduce phosphorus in Lake Monona by only a small amount over its 20-year life-span.

Why Question the Phosphorus Coagulation Project ?

- The project will transform a currently groundwater-fed living pond, hosting fish, aquatic plants, migrating birds, into a single-purpose, industrial project site.

- The [Darbo Worthington Neighborhood Plan](#) demonstrates clear desires from residents for more nearby park access, improved *water* access, and for spaces that feel culturally appropriate and like they are part of the neighborhood.
 - The 2018 [EPA freshwater criteria](#) for aluminum in lakes indicates aluminum at acute and chronic levels is toxic to freshwater life **under some conditions**. It can interfere with fish breathing, osmotic regulation in fish, and wipe out benthic invertebrates such as mayflies, dragonflies, damselflies, stoneflies, beetles, moths, bugs and springtails.
 - Several phosphorus control measures are already in place that we can invest in and that do not concentrate phosphorus but are appropriately designed for a distributed problem. These include paying farmers to use conservation practices ([Yahara Wins](#)); incentivizing urban landowners to invest in raingardens and other urban greening and phosphorus capturing green [infrastructure](#); and enforcing existing DNR [guidelines](#) on bare ground and eroding shorelines.
 - There are other possible Starkweather Creek phosphorus coagulation project sites not in the Waters of Wisconsin, such as the Dempsey drainage side channel east of Walter Street, where the City already owns land.
 - Although the larger Voit Farm plans will add needed green space, the removal of a living pond from the area, to be replaced by an industrial project involving heavy trucks and machinery, severely downgrades the potential of the space for underserved neighborhoods and the east side in general.
 - The public process for making the decision to pursue the project has been less-inclusive and less-than-transparent. There has been only two public meetings, in 2016 & 2017, to inform people about the project and receive feedback. Many people on the east side are still unaware of the project.
 - Voit Pond, left intact and nurtured as a living space, has great potential as one element in a larger vision of a connected green and open space corridor.
 - This type of space is much needed on the more highly industrial/commercial eastside of Madison. The potential to add amenities such as fishing, green space connectivity, outdoor activities, quiet, and more will be severely compromised by a phosphorus coagulation project.



For more information visit the Voit Pond [Facebook](#) page. 8.27.2019