

2014 Report: Fern Lake

Adirondack Lake Assessment Program



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Acknowledgements

The Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP) is collaboration between the Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) (www.adkwatershed.org), Protect the Adirondacks (PROTECT) (www.protectadks.org), volunteer lakes monitors, and lake associations. The AWI is a program of Paul Smith's College that conducts research and service work broadly focused on conservation and protection of water resources. PROTECT is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and stewardship of the public and private lands of the Adirondack Park, and to building the health and diversity of its human communities and economies for the benefit of current and future generations. PROTECT recruits volunteers to participate in the program and provides administrative support, while AWI trains volunteers, conducts site visits, analyzes samples, and writes the reports. As such, this report and all results and interpretations contained herein were the sole responsibility of AWI. The narrative and results presented in this report were produced by Corey Laxson (Research Associate), Elizabeth Yerger (Research Assistant), and Daniel L Kelting (Executive Director), all with the AWI. Laboratory work on samples received from ALAP volunteers was conducted by Corey Laxson, Elizabeth Yerger, Sean Patton, Brandon Morey, and Dan Kelting. Sean Regalado produced watershed maps in GIS. Peter Bauer, Nancy Bernstein and Evelyn Greene from PROTECT provided administrative support. The lake sampling was conducted by the dedicated ALAP volunteers. John and Ellen Collins, Susan Murante and Marty Mozdier provided locations for sample collection hubs. Paul Smith's College provided office and laboratory space. PROTECT is very grateful for the support provide to ALAP from the F.M. Kirby Foundation.



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Cover Photo: Lower Saranac Lake, an ALAP participating lake since 2001.

How to Use This Report

The ALAP reports are designed to provide lake information to the informed lay person, scientific community, lake managers, and other interested individuals. As such, it is written in a way to provide something for everyone. The report includes an overview of the water quality indicators, a detailed description of the methods, discussion of this year's results and historical trends, and characterization of the trophic status of the lake. Members of the scientific community will likely find the entire document useful, while readers who are interested in a simple summary of the lake may find the *Executive Summary* and the *Quick Facts* sections to be most helpful. The data and accompanying analysis provided in this report give insight into the water quality of the study lakes, more detailed limnological studies may be necessary to produce management recommendations or specific trend interpretations. Readers interested in additional information or accesses to the raw data are welcome to contact the corresponding author.

The data in this document are reported in metric units. Although this system has not been fully adopted in the United States, it is the standard system of measurement used by scientists and lake managers throughout the world. Information on converting the metric units of measurements used in this report to English units is provided below. The amount of chemical elements dissolved in the lake samples are always described using metric concentration units. The most common ways chemical data is expressed is in milligrams per liter (mg/L) and micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$). One milligram per liter is equal to one part analyte to one million parts water. One microgram per liter is equal to one part analyte to one billion parts water.

Metric Unit	Multiply by	English Unit
Liters (L)	1.05	Quart (qt)
Meters (m)	3.38	Feet (ft)
Kilometer (km)	0.62	Miles (mi)
Hectares (ha)	2.47	Acres (ac)
Cubic Meters (m^3)	1.31	Cubic Yards (yd^3)

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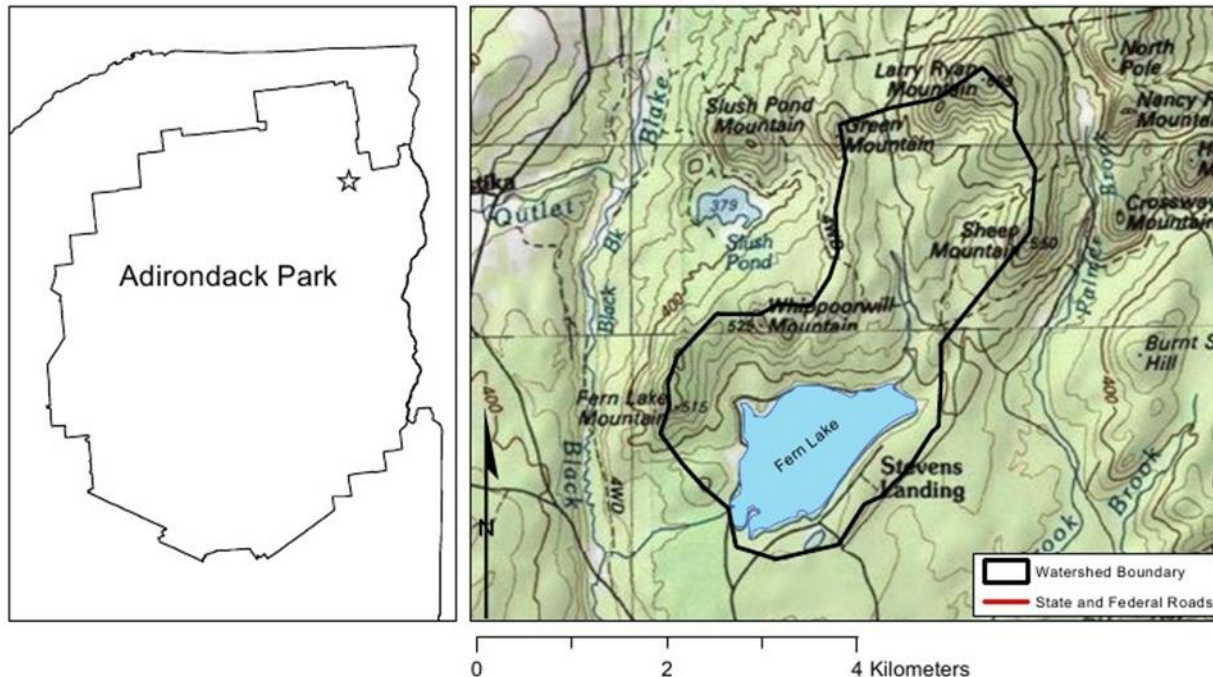
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Quick Facts – Fern Lake



County: Clinton
Town: Black Brook

Lake Area (ha): 169
Watershed Area (ha): 1,014

Trophic Status: Mesotrophic

Years in ALAP: 11

2014 Water Quality Indicators and Long-Term Trends*:

Indicator	Avg.	Trend
Transparency (m)	3.3	no trend
Total P (µg/L)	11.9	no trend
Chlorophyll- <i>a</i> (µg/L)	7.4	no trend
Laboratory pH	7.3	no trend
Conductance (µS/cm)	43.8	no trend
Color (Pt-Co)	20.2	no trend

Indicator	Avg.	Trend
Alkalinity (mg/L)	15.0	no trend
Nitrate (µg/L)	1.4	na
Chloride (mg/L)	3.7	no trend
Calcium (mg/L)	4.4	na
Sodium (mg/L)	2.3	na

*Represents the lake wide averages from the three sampling locations

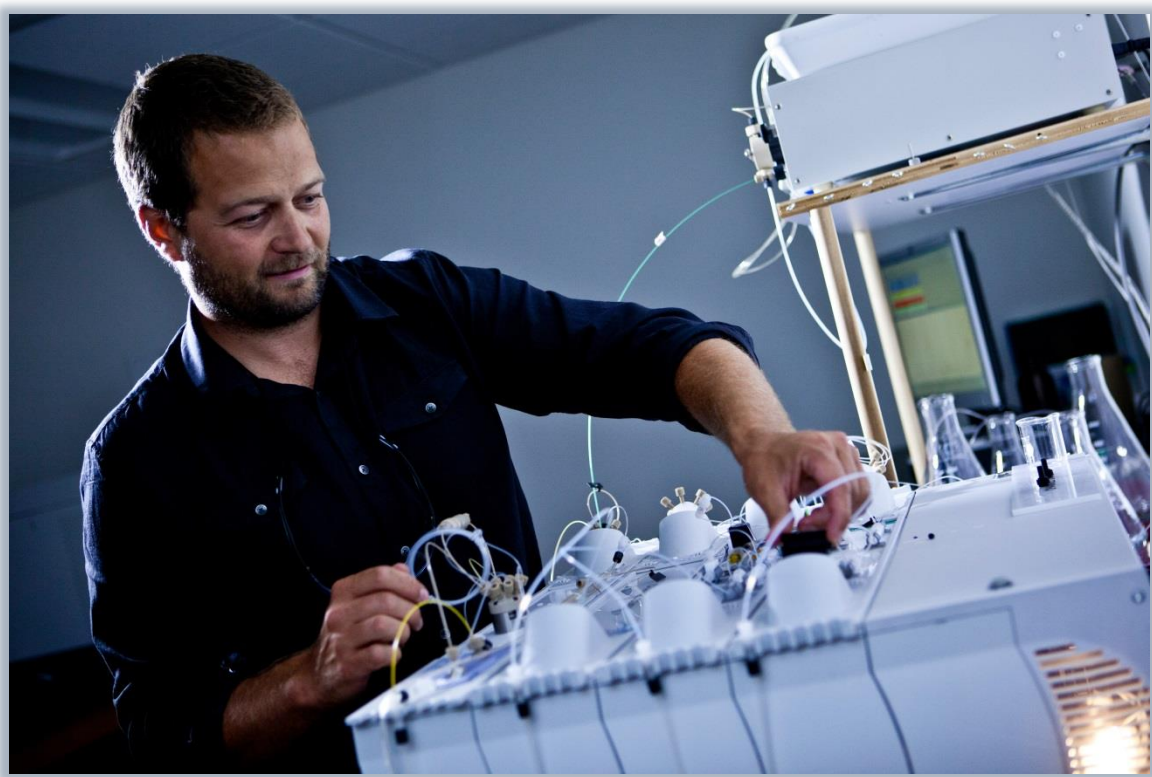
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Water quality analysis in the AWI Environmental Research Lab

Executive Summary

Fern Lake is a 169 ha lake located in Clinton County in the Town of Black Brook. The lake is located within a 1,014 ha watershed dominated by forests. Fern Lake has been monitored by ALAP volunteers and the Adirondack Watershed Institute since 2005. Three samples, from three locations around the lake, were analyzed in 2014 for transparency, chlorophyll-a, total phosphorus, nitrate, pH, color, alkalinity, conductivity, chloride, calcium and sodium. This report presents the 2014 data from each of the sampling locations and describes lake wide long-term trends in water quality for analytes with sufficient data.

1. The Secchi disk transparency of the lake averaged 3.3 meters in 2014. The transparency observations have been relatively constant over the 11 years of ALAP participation, and shown no significant trend.
2. Chlorophyll-a concentration (a surrogate for algal productivity) averaged 7.4 µg/L in 2014, which is the highest annual average observed in the 11 year data set. Historically, the chlorophyll concentrations have been highly variable with no significant trend detected in the data.
3. Total phosphorus concentrations averaged 11.9 µg/L. The observed concentration of phosphorus have highly variable the past five years with no significant trend detected in the data.
4. Carlson's Trophic Status Index calculated with secchi transparency (42.8), chlorophyll (49.5), suggest a mesotrophic classification for the lake, while the TSI calculated from total phosphorus (38.9) indicates an oligotrophic status. This disparity in TSI values is common in Adirondack lakes that experience periods of phosphorus limitation (Table 4). The trophic state of Fern Lake is typically mesotrophic with all three indicators of trophic status in close agreement (Figure 3).
5. Fern Lake is a neutral water body with a typical pH value between 7 and 8. The buffering ability of the lake has been highly variable, with a historical range between 13 and 42 mg/L as CaCO₃. Lakes with alkalinity in this range are not particularly sensitive to acid deposition.
6. Adirondack lakes in watersheds without paved roads typically have sodium and chloride concentrations less than 0.55 and 0.24 mg/L, respectively (Kelting et al 2012). Average concentrations in Fern Lake during 2014 were 2.3 mg/L for sodium and 3.7 mg/L for chloride. These values are within the range expected for a lake with limited roadways and development in the watershed. The concentrations of these chemicals are well below the EPA drinking water standard established for sodium (20 mg/L) and the guideline recommended for chloride (250 mg/L).
7. Calcium concentrations in Fern Lake (4.4 mg/L) are below the threshold required for the establishment of a viable zebra mussel population (8-20 mg/L).

Though the data and accompanying analysis provided in this report give insight into the water quality of Fern Lake, more detailed limnological studies may be necessary to produce management recommendations or specific trend interpretations.

Introduction

The Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP) is a cooperative citizen science lake monitoring program between Protect the Adirondacks (PROTECT), the Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI), and numerous dedicated volunteers from across the Adirondack Park and beyond. The objectives of ALAP are to (1) develop a reliable water quality database for Adirondack lakes, (2) document historical trends in their limnological condition, and (3) engender lake stewardship by providing opportunities for citizens to participate in scientific monitoring. To accomplish these objectives participating lakes are sampled throughout the summer by trained volunteers and analyzed by the AWI for indicators of trophic productivity (total phosphorus, chlorophyll, transparency) and water quality (nutrients, pH, alkalinity, color, chloride, and metals). ALAP continues to be a highly successful program. Established in 1998 with 9 participating lakes, the program has grown to 72 lakes in 2014 (Figure 1 and Table 1). For many lakes the ALAP dataset represents the only available source of current water quality information.

Table 1. 2014 ALAP lakes organized by the number of years in the program.

Lake Name	Years	Lake Name	Years	Lake Name	Years
Blue Mnt. Lake	17	Rich Lake	14	Mountain View Lake	10
Eagle Lake	17	Tripp Lake	14	Fern Lake	10
Loon Lake	17	Twitchell Lake	14	Chazy Lake	8
Oven Mtn Pond	17	Wolf Lake	14	Lower Chateaugay Lake	8
Silver Lake	17	Balfour Lake	13	Upper Chateaugay Lake	8
13th Lake	16	Garnet Lake	13	Chapel Pond	7
Brandreth Lake	16	Lens Lake	13	Simon Pond	7
Eli Pond	16	Lower Saranac Lake	13	Lake Adirondack	6
Gull Pond	16	Lower St. Regis Lake	13	Upper Cascade Lake	6
Little Long Lake	16	Snowshoe Pond	13	Amber Lake	5
Stony Creek Ponds	16	Spitfire Lake	13	Augur Lake	5
Austin Pond	15	Upper St. Regis Lake	13	Otter Pond	5
Cranberry Lake	15	Canada Lake	12	Jordan Lake	5
Middle Saranac Lake	15	Kiwassa Lake	12	Lake Titus	5
Osgood Pond	15	Lake Colby	12	Star Lake	5
Trout Lake	15	Raquette Lake	12	Lake Clear	4
White Lake	15	Sherman Lake	12	Lake Durant	4
Arbutus Lake	14	Tupper Lake	12	Lake Eaton (EC)	1
Catlin Lake	14	Indian Lake (HC)	11	Lake Placid	1
Deer Lake	14	Big Moose Lake	10	Mill Pond	1
Hoel Pond	14	Dug Mnt. Pond	10	Mirror Lake	1
Lake of the Pines	14	Indian Lake (FC)	10	Paradox Lake	1
Long Pond	14	Lake Abanakee	10	Schroon Lake	1
Pleasant Lake	14	Moss Lake	10		

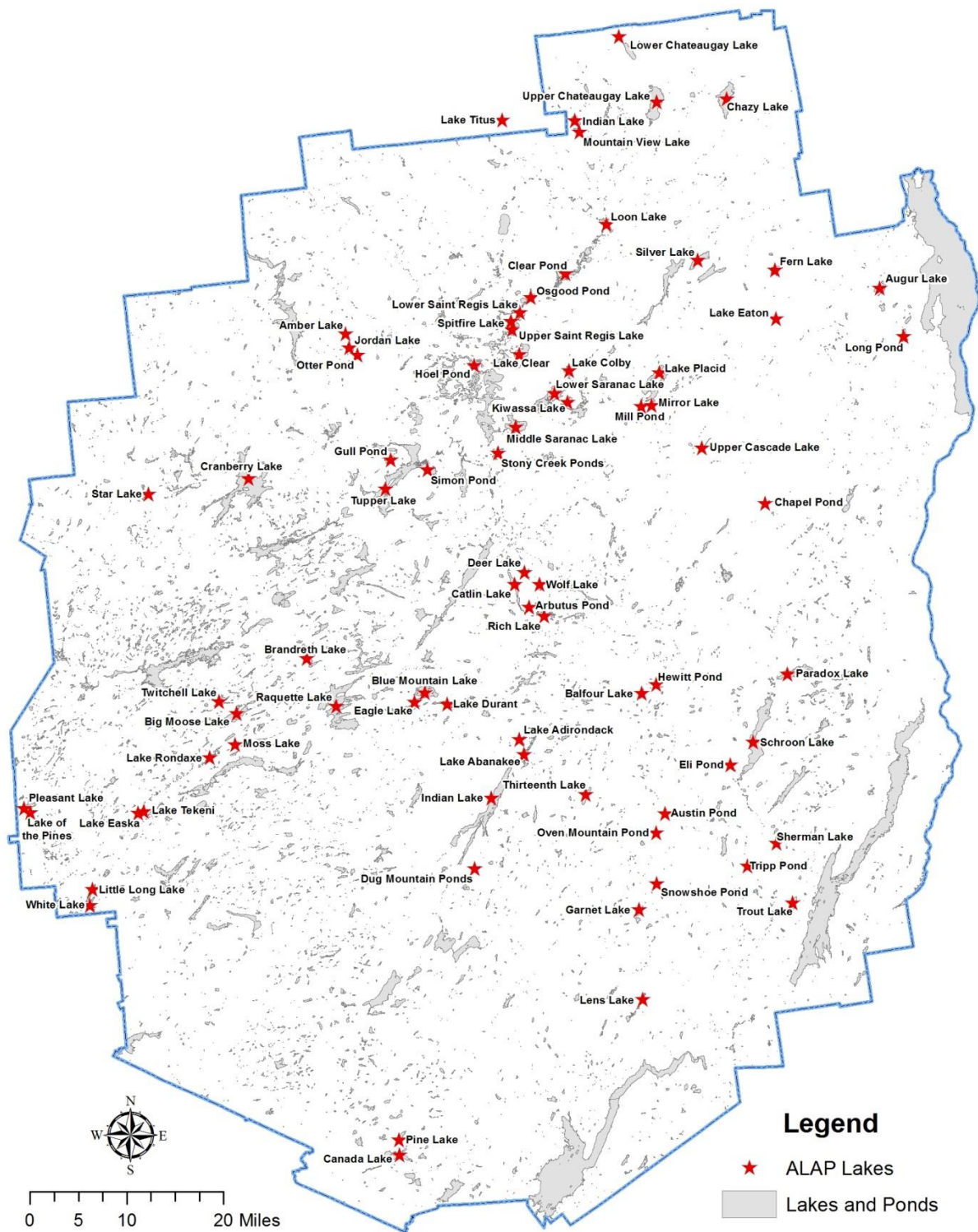


Figure 1. Locations and names of lakes that participated in the Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP) in 2014.

Table 2. Lake and watershed characteristics for Fern Lake.

Location	County:	Clinton	Latitude:	44.4889
	Town:	Black Brook	Longitude:	-73.7193
Lake Characteristics	Lake Area (ha):	169	Z-max (m):	
	Lake Perimeter (km):	7	Volume (m ³):	3,887,513
			Flushing Rate (T/Y):	1.9
Watershed Characteristics	Watershed Area (ha):	1,014	Residential (%):	0
	Surface Water (%):	18	Agriculture (%):	0
	Deciduous Forest (%):	62	Commercial (%):	1
	Evergreen Forest (%):	5	Local Roads (km):	4.3
	Mixed Forest (%):	14	State Roads (km):	0.0
	Wetlands (%):	0		

Methods

Fern Lake is located in the northern Adirondacks (Figure 2) in Clinton County in the Town of Black Brook (Table 2). The lake is 169 ha in surface area and has 7 km of shoreline. The total volume is 3,887,513 m³, and the lake flushes about 1.9 times per year. The Fern Lake watershed is 1,014 ha, 18% of which is surface water. The watershed is dominated by forest cover, with 62% deciduous, 5% evergreen, and 14% mixed forests. The watershed contains 4.3 km of local roads (county, town, and local) and no state roads (state and US highways, Table 2.)

ALAP volunteers were trained by AWI staff in standard limnological sampling methods. Data was collected from the deepest location of the lake, 3 to 5 times during the summer months. During each sampling event volunteers observed the secchi transparency reading by lowering a standard 20 cm black and white secchi disk to a depth where it could no longer be seen. This process was repeated and the average secchi depth for that day was recorded. Surface water samples were collected using a 2 meter integrated tube sampler. The contents of the tube were poured into a 1 liter brown bottle and thoroughly mixed. A 250 mL aliquot of the integrated sample was collected for chemical analysis and a second 250 mL aliquot was filtered through a 0.45 µm cellulose membrane filter for chlorophyll-a analysis. The filter was retrieved and wrapped in foil. The water sample and chlorophyll filter were frozen immediately after collection and delivered frozen to the AWI Environmental Research Lab, generally within a 10 day period.

Samples were analyzed for pH, conductivity, alkalinity, total phosphorus, nitrate, chlorophyll-a, chloride calcium and sodium at the AWI Environmental Research Lab following the analytical methods described in Appendix 1. Results for 2014 were tabulated and time series charts were constructed from the annual average value for each indicator. Trend analysis was conducted using Kendall's non-parametric regression to test the hypothesis "there is no relationship between the indicator and time". Simple

linear trend lines were fit to data with significant trends ($P < 0.05$) and displayed on the corresponding chart. Thus, absence of a line means there was no statistically significant trend in the indicator over time.

Average annual values for secchi disk transparency, total phosphorus, and chlorophyll-a were used to calculate Carlson's Trophic Status Index, (TSI), a commonly used quantitative index for classifying lakes based on trophic status (Carlson 1977). TSI values are calculated as follows:

- $TSI (\text{Secchi Disk}) = 60 - 16.41 \times \ln[\text{Secchi Disk (m)}]$
- $TSI (\text{Chlorophyll}) = 30.6 + 9.81 \times \ln[\text{Chlorophyll a } (\mu\text{g/L})]$
- $TSI (\text{Total Phosphorus}) = 4.15 + 14.42 \times \ln[\text{Total Phosphorus } (\mu\text{g/L})]$

Typically TSI values are between 0 and 100. Lakes with TSI values less than 40 are classified as oligotrophic, TSI values between 40 and 50 are classified as mesotrophic, and TSI values greater than 50 are classified as eutrophic. A detailed description of TSI values and likely lake attributes is found in Table 3.

Table 3. Trophic classification of lakes based on Carlson's Trophic Status Index (TSI).

TSI Value	Trophic Classification*	Likely Attributes
<30	Oligotrophic	Clear water, high oxygen throughout hypolimnion during the entire year
30-40	Oligotrophic	Clear water, periods of hypolimnetic anoxia possible during the summer in relatively shallow lakes
40-50	Mesotrophic	Moderately clear, increasing probability of hypolimnetic anoxia during the summer
50-60	Eutrophic	Mildly eutrophic. Decreased transparency, hypolimnetic anoxia, and warm water fishery only. Supports all recreational / aesthetic uses but threatened.
60-70	Eutrophic	Dominance of blue-green algae, algal blooms likely, extensive macrophytes growth in shallow water
70-80	Eutrophic	Heavy algal blooms possible throughout summer, hyper eutrophic
>80	Eutrophic	Algal scum, summer fish kills, few macrophytes due to algal shading

Results and Discussion

The opening paragraph in each of the following sections provides basic background information for understanding the importance of each water quality indicator and interpreting data from the lake. The background paragraph is followed by a description of the results for the study lake as well as a comparison to the other lakes in the ALAP. The 2014 water quality results for Fern Lake are tabulated in Table 5, frequency histograms of the water quality indicators for all participating ALAP lakes are displayed in Figure 2, and the historical trends for Fern Lake are plotted in Figures 3 and 4.

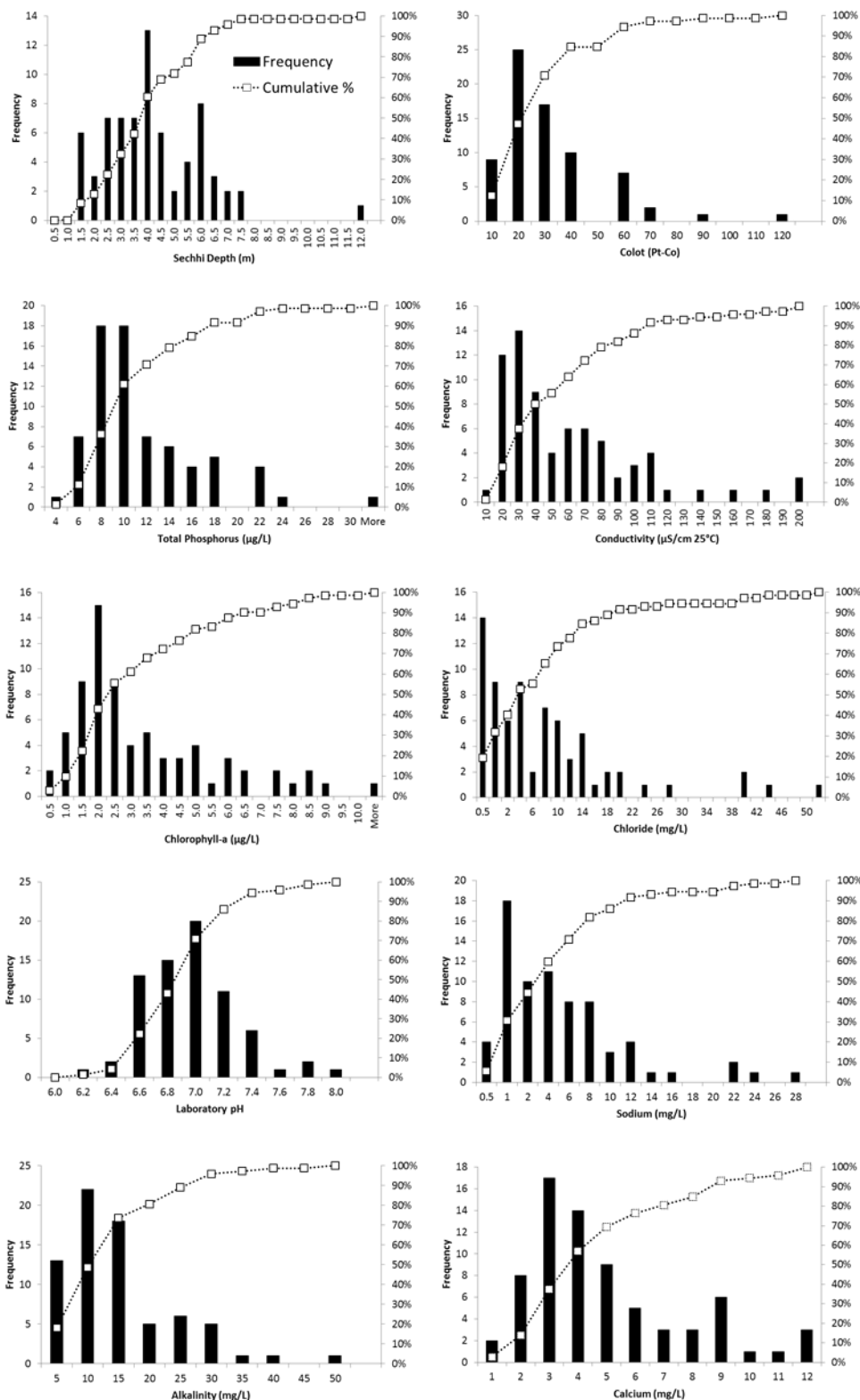


Figure 2. Frequency histogram (bars) and cumulative percentage (plots) of 2014 water quality indicators for the 72 participating lakes. Figure is constructed with each lakes 2014 average.

Transparency

Transparency is a measure of water clarity in lakes. It is measured by lowering a 20 cm black and white disk (Secchi disk) to the depth where it is no longer visible from the surface. The transparency of a lake is influenced by many factors, including algal abundance, turbidity, suspended sediments, and dissolved organic matter (Hutchinson 1957). Transparency can serve as an important indicator of overall trophic condition of a lake as well as influencing human perception of water quality. In general, lakes that have low productivity and low algal abundance have greater secchi transparencies. As algal productivity increases secchi depths become much shallower.

Transparency of Fern Lake ranged between 3.0 and 3.5 meters with a lake wide average of 3.3 meters in 2014 (Table 4). The majority of lakes in the ALAP data set (68%) had a transparency greater than that of Fern Lake (Figure 2). Over the 10 years of participation in ALAP, transparency has ranged from 2.8 to 3.6 meters with no significant trend in the data (Figure 3). None of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in transparency over time, 11% showed a decreasing trend and 89% showed no trend in the data.

Phosphorus

Phosphorus is of major importance to structure and metabolism of all organisms. However, it exists in relatively small amounts in freshwater systems compared to other essential nutrients such as carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and sulfur. The addition of extra phosphorus to an aquatic system allows production to increase greatly because all other essential elements are usually available in excess. Thus phosphorus is typically the limiting nutrient in aquatic systems (Schindler 1974, Wetzel 2001), and widely considered as the most important contributor to reduced water quality in lakes (Søndergaard et al. 2003). Natural weathering releases phosphorus from rocks and soils, and it also enters our watersheds in fertilizers, human waste, and atmospheric deposition. Phosphorus exists in a number of forms in aquatic systems, including readily available dissolved phosphorus, and organically and inorganically bound phosphorus. Total phosphorus is all of the forms of phosphorus combined and serves as an important indicator of overall trophic status of a lake. Generally speaking, lakes of low productivity (oligotrophic) have total phosphorus concentrations less than 10 µg/L, while highly productive lakes (eutrophic) have total phosphorus concentrations greater than 20 µg/L (NYS DEC assessment criteria).

Total phosphorus in the surface water of Fern Lake ranged from 6.6 to 19.2 µg/L in 2014 (Table 4). The lake wide average was 11.9 µg/L in 2014 (Table 4), which is lower than 40% of ALAP Lakes (Figure 2). Historically, average total phosphorus concentrations have ranged from below detection to 26.2 µg/L with no apparent trend in the data (Figure 3). None of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in total phosphorus over time, 33 % showed a decreasing trend, and 67% showed no trend in the data.

Table 4. Water quality indicators by sampling date and average for Fern Lake, 2014. BDL = Below detection level.

Water Quality Indicator	Sampling Date			Average
	7/24/2014	8/22/2014	9/19/2014	
<i>Beach</i>				
Secchi Transparency (m)	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.3
Total Phosphorus ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	12.5	19.2	7.5	13.1
Chlorophyll- <i>a</i> ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	8.5	12.7	6.1	9.1
Laboratory pH	6.8	6.7	8.5	7.3
Specific Conductance ($\mu\text{S/cm}$)	44.0	44.5	44.0	44.2
Color (Pt-Co)	32.0	22.7	13.3	22.7
Alkalinity (mg/L)	15.3	14.4	14.5	14.7
Nitrate-Nitrogen ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	1.6	11.2	0.1	4.3
Chloride (mg/L)	3.2	3.7	4.2	3.7
Calcium (mg/L)	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.4
Sodium (mg/L)	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.3
<i>Deep Hole</i>				
Secchi Transparency (m)	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Total Phosphorus ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	9.0	15.5	7.0	10.5
Chlorophyll- <i>a</i> ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	9.6	9.9	5.2	8.2
Laboratory pH	6.8	6.8	8.2	7.2
Specific Conductance ($\mu\text{S/cm}$)	44.8	44.3	41.4	43.5
Color (Pt-Co)	22.7	16.4	16.4	18.5
Alkalinity (mg/L)	15.4	14.4	15.7	15.2
Nitrate-Nitrogen ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	-0.8	1.6	-0.3	0.2
Chloride (mg/L)	3.2	3.8	3.9	3.6
Calcium (mg/L)	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.4
Sodium (mg/L)	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.3

Water Quality Indicator	Sampling Date			Average
	7/24/2014	8/22/2014	9/19/2014	
	<i>Marsh</i>			
Secchi Transparency (m)	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.1
Total Phosphorus ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	15.5	14.7	6.6	12.3
Chlorophyll- <i>a</i> ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	2.9	6.0	6.0	5.0
Laboratory pH	6.8	6.9	8.4	7.4
Specific Conductance ($\mu\text{S/cm}$)	45.4	44.2	41.8	43.8
Color (Pt-Co)	22.6	22.7	13.3	19.5
Alkalinity (mg/L)	15.6	14.4	15.1	15.0
Nitrate-Nitrogen ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	0.5	1.2	-2.1	-0.1
Chloride (mg/L)	3.3	3.7	4.0	3.7
Calcium (mg/L)	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.4
Sodium (mg/L)	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.3

Chlorophyll-a

Chlorophyll-a is the primary photosynthetic pigment found in all species of algae, as well as cyanobacteria. A measurement of chlorophyll in a lake provides a surrogate measure of algal productivity (Wetzel 2001). Chlorophyll-a is not a direct measure of algal biomass as the concentration of chlorophyll varies somewhat by species and environmental conditions. This said, increases in chlorophyll are generally associated with increased algal production, and the concentration of chlorophyll is widely considered as the most direct measure of the trophic state of lakes. Algal biomass is affected by nutrient availability, water temperature, and light, so there can be considerable variation in chlorophyll concentrations throughout the year depending on which of these three factors is limiting growth at a particular time. Though, major changes in algal biomass (e.g. an algae bloom), and thus chlorophyll, are usually related to changes in the availability of phosphorus, nitrogen, silica or inorganic carbon (Wetzel 2001; Klemer 1990).

Chlorophyll concentration in Fern Lake ranged from 2.9 to 12.7 $\mu\text{g/L}$ with a lake wide average of 7.4 $\mu\text{g/L}$ in 2014 (Table 4). The majority of ALAP lakes (93%) had annual average chlorophyll-a concentrations less than Fern Lake (Figure 2). Historically, the annual average concentration of chlorophyll-a has ranged from 2.3 to 7.4 $\mu\text{g/L}$ with no apparent trend detected in the data (Figure 3). Two percent of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in chlorophyll over time, 11 % showed a decreasing trend, and 86% showed no trend in the data.

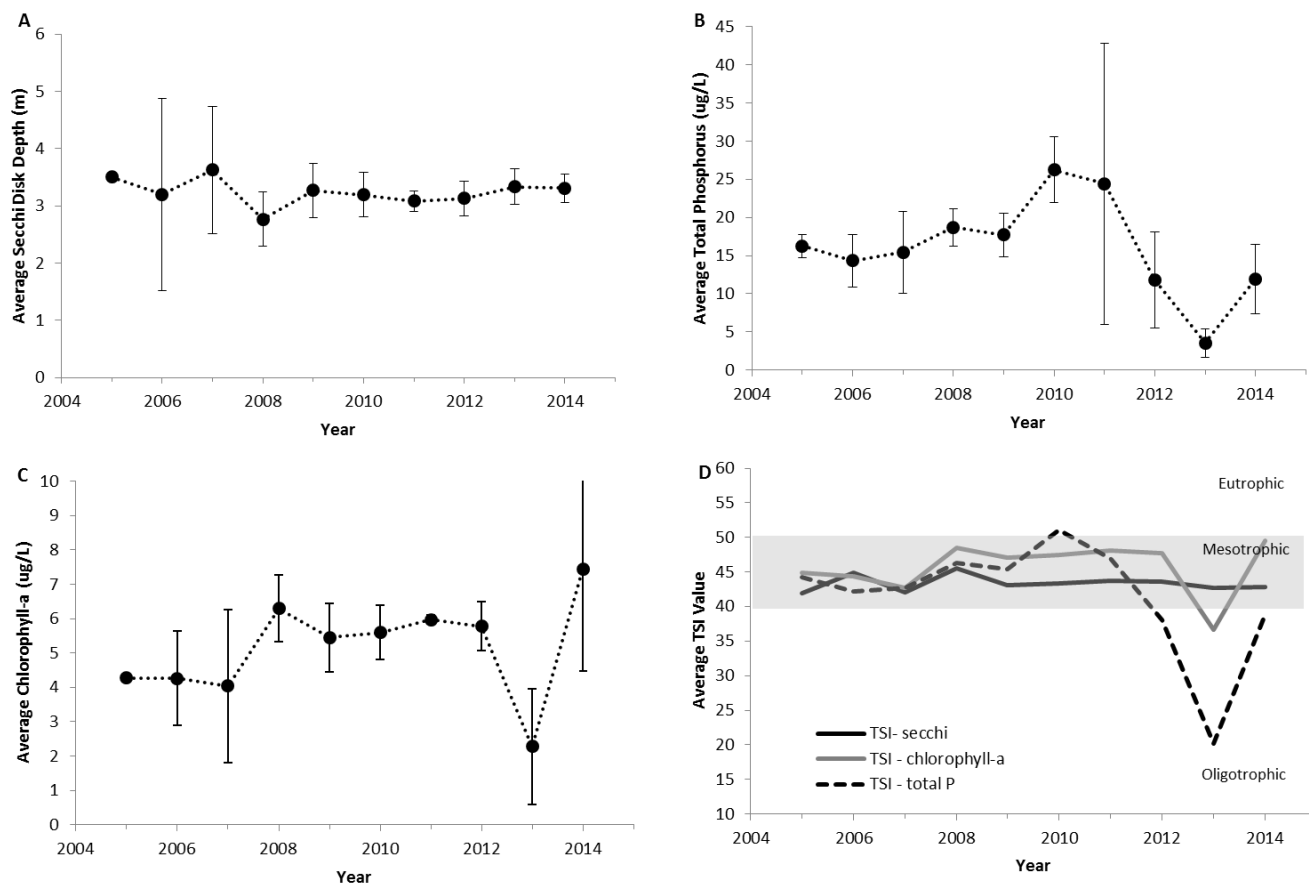


Figure 3. The annual average values of epilimnetic trophic indicators of Fern Lake, 2005-2014. (A) Secchi disk transparency, (B) total phosphorus concentration, (C) chlorophyll-a concentration, and (D) Carlson's Trophic Status Index. Vertical bars represent one standard deviation of the mean. Significant trends ($P < 0.05$) are noted with a trend line.

Trophic Status

Trophic status is a term derived from the Greek word *troph*, meaning food or nourishment, and is used by limnologists to explain the overall productivity of a lake. Lake productivity is naturally influenced by the rate of nutrient supply from the watershed, climatic condition, and lake and watershed morphology. Human activities within a watershed have the potential to increase the rate of nutrient supply into the lake, and thereby accelerate algal productivity (cultural eutrophication).

Lakes are typically assigned into one of three trophic or productivity classes (oligotrophic, mesotrophic, eutrophic) based on total phosphorus, chlorophyll *a*, and Secchi transparency.

- **Oligotrophic** - From the Greek words *oligo*, meaning few and *troph*, meaning nourishment; oligotrophic lakes have low levels of available nutrients. As a result of low nutrients, oligotrophic lakes have high transparency, low algal abundance, low organic matter in the sediments, sparse aquatic plant growth, and abundant dissolved oxygen throughout the water column the entire year. Oligotrophic lakes are most likely to support a cold water fishery (Wetzel 2001).

- **Eutrophic** - From the Greek words *Eu*, meaning good. Eutrophic lakes have abundant levels of nutrients. As a result of high nutrient availability eutrophic lakes are typified by high algal productivity, low transparency, high organic matter in the sediments, and periods of anoxia in the bottom of the water column (hypolimnion). Eutrophic lakes tend to support dense aquatic plant growth in the littoral zone. Eutrophic lakes are unlikely to support a viable cold water fishery (Wetzel 2001).
- **Mesotrophic** - from the Greek words *Meso*, meaning the middle. Mesotrophic lakes are an intermediate trophic classification on the continuum between oligotrophy and eutrophy.

The Carlson Trophic Status Index (TSI Index) is a common and valuable metric for evaluating the productivity of a lake (Carlson 1977). The index is calculated by logarithmically converting the values of Secchi transparency, chlorophyll-a concentration, and total phosphorus to a scale of relative trophic state ranging from 0-100. TSI values less than 40 are considered oligotrophic, values between 40 and 50 are considered mesotrophic, and values greater than 50 are eutrophic (Table 3). Calculating the TSI scores from three trophic indicators allows further interpretation of productivity status of the lake.

The TSI for Fern Lake calculated with secchi transparency (42.8), chlorophyll (49.5), suggest a mesotrophic classification for the lake, while the TSI calculated from total phosphorus (38.9) indicates an oligotrophic status. This disparity in TSI values is common in Adirondack lakes that experience periods of phosphorus limitation (Table 4). The trophic state of Fern Lake is typically mesotrophic with all three indicators of trophic status in close agreement (Figure 3).

pH

pH is a measurement of the concentration of hydrogen ions in water (acidity). Hydrogen ions are very active, and their interaction with other molecules affects the behavior of gasses, nutrients, and heavy metals and biological activity; thus pH is considered a master variable for its influence on chemical processes and aquatic life. pH exists on a logarithmic scale between 0 and 14. Because pH is logarithmic a decrease in 1 pH unit represents a 10 fold increase in hydrogen ion activity. Lakes are considered circumneutral when they have a pH between 6.5 and 7.5, while lakes with pH values less than 6.5 are considered acidic and those with pH values greater than 7.5 are considered basic. Lakes can become acidified when they are influenced by organic acids from soils, wetlands and bogs or when acidic precipitation falls on a poorly buffered watershed (Dodson 2005, Wetzel 2001). Acidity is also influenced by the time of day. For example, water samples taken during a bright sunny afternoon will often have elevated pH levels due to algal photosynthesis and the subsequent removal of carbon dioxide from the water (Dodson 2005). This natural process along with release of carbon dioxide by respiration means lake pH can fluctuate throughout the day.

Fern Lake is a circumneutral water body. In 2014 the pH of the water samples ranged from 6.8 to 8.5 pH units with a across the lake annual average of 7.4 pH units (Table 4). The majority of lakes in the ALAP data set (95%) had a pH lower than that of Fern Lake (Figure 2). Over the past 10 years of monitoring the pH of Fern Lake has ranged from 6.8 to 9.4 pH units with no trend apparent in the data (Figure 4).

Three percent of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in pH over time, none of the lakes showed a decreasing trend, and 97% showed no trend in the data.

Alkalinity

Alkalinity (or acid neutralizing ability) measures the buffering capacity of a lake, which is the ability of the lake to resist a change in pH. High alkalinity lakes are well buffered against changes in pH, while low alkalinity lakes are poorly buffered against changes in pH. Thus, a high alkalinity lake would have a more stable pH compared to a low alkalinity lake, and a more stable pH is less stressful to aquatic life. The carbonate system provides acid buffering through two alkaline compounds: bicarbonate (HCO_3^-) and carbonate (CO_3^{2-}). These two compounds are typically found in association with calcium or magnesium. Lakes with less than 10 mg/L calcium carbonate are sensitive to acidification, while lakes with greater than 20 mg/L calcium carbonate are not sensitive to acidification (Godfrey et al. 1996).

In 2014 the alkalinity ranged from 14.4 to 15.7 mg/L and a lake wide average of 14.9 mg/L as calcium carbonate (Table 4). The majority of lakes in the ALAP data set (73%) have an average alkalinity concentration lower than Fern Lake (Figure 2). Historically the alkalinity of the lake has ranged between 13.8 to 42.2 mg/L with no statistical trend apparent in the data (Figure 4). None of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in alkalinity over time, 29% of the lakes showed a decreasing trend, and 70% showed no trend in the data.

Color

The observed color of a lake is an optical property that results from light being scattered upwards after selective absorption by water molecules as well as dissolved (metallic ions, organic acids) and suspended (silt, plant pigments) materials. For example, alkaline lakes with high concentrations of calcium carbonate scatter light in the green and blue wavelength and thus appear turquoise in color. Lakes rich in dissolved organic matter and humic compounds absorb shorter wavelengths of light such as green and blue and scatter the longer wavelengths of red and yellow, thus these lakes appear to be brown in color (Wetzel 2001). Thus analysis of color can provide us with information about the quantity of dissolved organic material in the water. For objective quantification of apparent color we compare water samples to standards of platinum-cobalt solution. (Pt-Co units).

Apparent color values from Fern Lake ranged from 13.3 to 32.0 Pt-Co units, and averaged 20.2 Pt-Co units lake wide in 2014 (Table 4). The majority of ALAP lakes (55%) had greater color to the water than Fern Lake (Figure 2). Over the period of ALAP participation the color value of the lake has ranged between 12.6 to 36.6 Pt-Co units with no statistical trend detected in the data (Figure 4). Eleven percent of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in color over time, none of the lakes showed a decreasing trend, and 89% showed no trend in the data.

Conductivity

Pure water is a poor conductor of electricity. The ability of water to conduct electricity increases as the concentration of dissolved ions in the water increases. Thus, conductivity is considered a strong indicator of the amount of dissolved ions in water. Typically the conductivity of a clean undeveloped lake in the Adirondacks is in the range of 10-25 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$. Elevated conductance may be indicative of road

salt pollution, faulty septic systems or the influence of bogs and wetlands in the watershed. Conductivity is a very useful surrogate when the relationships between ion concentrations and conductivity are known. For example, conductivity can be used to estimate sodium and chloride concentrations in streams (Daley et al. 2009).

Conductance values of Fern Lake exhibited little variation around the lake wide average value of 43.8 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ (Table 4). The alkalinity of Fern Lake represents approximately the median value for the participating ALAP lakes (Figure 2). Historically the conductivity of the lake has ranged from 39.2 to 50.8 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ with little variation and no statistical trend (Figure 4). Three percent of the participating ALAP lakes showed a positive trend in conductivity over time, 22% of the lakes showed a decreasing trend, and 75% showed no trend in the data.

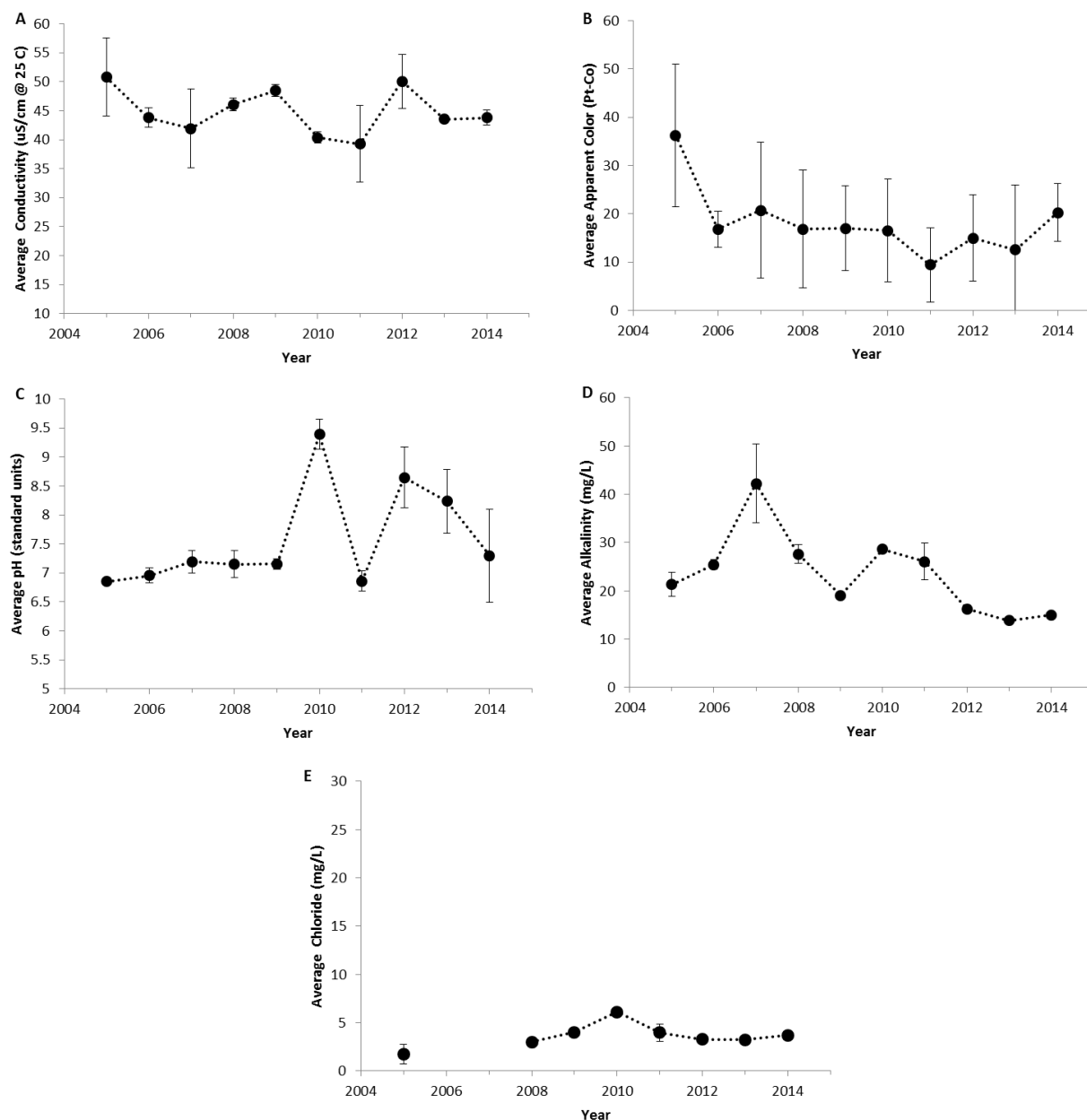


Figure 4. The annual average values of water quality indicators of Fern Lake, 2005-2014. (A) Specific lab conductivity @ 25 C, (B) apparent color, (C) pH, (D) total alkalinity, and (E) chloride. Vertical bars represent one standard deviation of the mean. Significant trends ($P \leq 0.05$) are noted with a trend line.

Sodium and Chloride

Non-impacted Lakes in the Adirondack region have naturally low concentrations of sodium and chloride, with average background concentrations of 0.5 mg/L and 0.24 mg/L respectively. However, wide spread use of road deicers (primarily sodium chloride) has significantly increased the concentration of these chemicals in lakes that have salted roads in their watersheds (Kelting et al 2012). Sodium and chloride can have negative effects on aquatic life when at high concentrations (Corsi et al. 2010), and can impart an undesirable taste to drinking water. The US EPA has a drinking water guideline of 250 mg/L for chloride and 20 mg/L for sodium, but these are not enforceable standards.

Average concentrations in Fern Lake during 2014 were 2.3 mg/L for sodium and 3.7 mg/L for chloride (Table 4). These values represent approximately the median of the ALAP dataset (Figure 2). Chloride concentrations generally ranged between 1.7 to 6.0 mg/L in Fern Lake with no apparent trend detected in the historical data (Figure 4). Historical trend analysis of sodium was not performed.

Calcium

Calcium is an essential element for plant growth, but is generally considered a micronutrient in freshwater systems (needed by organisms in tiny amounts, Wetzel 2001). Some organisms, such as shell producing mollusks, require larger amounts of calcium to establish a population. Calcium is derived from the weathering of calcium bearing bedrock, such as limestone and dolomite. The majority of the bedrock in the Adirondack region is comprised of granite, and thus offers little in the way of calcium to the watershed. Calcium concentration is a good indicator of the overall habitat suitability for the zebra mussel, a non-indigenous species from Eurasia that has been spreading through North America and transforming food webs and biochemical cycles in freshwater systems since 1988 (Strayer 2009). Researchers have reported minimum calcium concentrations ranging from 8-20 mg/L to support a viable zebra mussel population (Cohen 2004).

Calcium concentration in Fern Lake exhibited little variation around the lake wide average of 4.4 mg/L, well below the reported threshold ranges for the zebra mussel. The majority of ALAP lakes (60%) have calcium concentrations higher than that of Fern Lake. Historical trend analysis was not performed for calcium.

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Appendix 1. Analytical methods performed on ALAP samples at the AWI Environmental Research Lab.

Analyte	Method Description	Reference
Lab pH	Mettler Toledo standard pH electrode	APHA
Conductivity	Conductivity at 25° C via Mettler Toledo conductivity cell	APHA 2510 B
Apparent Color	Single wavelength method with PtCO standards	APHA 2120 C
Chlorophyll-a	Trichromatic method uncorrected for phaeophyton	APHA 10200 H
Total Phosphorus	Acid-persulfate digestion, automated ascorbic acid reduction	APHA 4500-P H
Nitrate + Nitrite	Automated cadmium reduction	APHA 4500-NO ₃ I
Alkalinity	Automated methyl orange method	EPA 301.2
Chloride	Automated ion chromatography	EPA 300.0
Calcium and Sodium	Inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectroscopy	EPA 200.7