On Thursday, September 3, 2026, NYSDEC Region 4 Bureau of Fisheries responded to a fish kill located at Copake Lake in Copake, NY. Local stakeholders called in a fish kill that had been occurring over a weeks' time (120 fish). About 100 dead/decaying fish were observed by DEC along some banks and floating on the water's surface. Fish were decomposing and we can assume that the individuals have been dead for three or more days. Species include bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus nigricans*), smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), walleye (*Sander vitreus*), and brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*). Seven moribund or recently dead bluegill and pumpkinseed were collected for pathology/histology and were sent vis FedEx overnight to Cornell for analysis by Jan Lovy.

Oxygen levels were above 5mg/L in the lake. Surface oxygen concentrations were collected at multiple locations around the lake and were all above 6.0mg/L. Fish can become stressed at 5.0mg/L and may begin to die when levels dip below this threshold. Surface temperature was 76.2- 78.1°F. There were no noticeable biofilms on the water surface or anoxic odors.

The lake association uses Pond and Lake Connection for their applications. There have been multiple treatments throughout the summer to combat invasives, algae and swimmers itch.

May 13: Diquat Herbicide for Curlyleaf Pondweed
June 10: Sonar for Eurasian Watermilfoil,
June: Copper sulfate
July 7/21: EarthTec QZ for Zebra Mussels July: Copper sulfate
August: Copper sulfate
September 2: Copper sulfate

This fish kill is due to a Columnaris (*Flavobacterium columnare*) outbreak with a secondary Saprolegnia (water mold) infection. Columnaris can effect many different species of fish and is a naturally occurring bacteria that lives in most freshwater lakes, ponds and streams. Seasonal water temperature changes can cause outbreaks of Columnaris but it is more common in lakes with high organic debris and warm temperatures. Saprolegnia then acts as an opportunistic pathogen which can attack stressed, injured or immunocompromised fishes.

Fish Kill Photos – Copake Lake

Copake, NY – September 3, 2026



Photo 1: Deceased fish next to public launch.



Photo 2: Deceased panfish in cattails.



Photo 3: Windblown deceased fish.



Photo 4: Deceased walleye.

Fish Kill Photos – Copake Lake

Copake, NY – September 3, 2026



Photo 5: Deceased fish in Bigleaf Pondweed.



Photo 6: Deceased bluegill & pumpkinseed.



Photo 7: Pumpkinseed with necrotic gills.



Photo 8: Bluegill with possible Saprolegnia infection.