

# Whitefish Pilot

Low water, fire smoke impacts lake water clarity

**By MATT BALDWIN**  
**Whitefish Pilot**

The hot and dry summer isn't just impacting the water elevation of Whitefish Lake, it's also having an effect on water clarity.

"We always have a spike

in algal production right after spring runoff when nutrients — phosphorus and nitrogen — are most abundant and the water begins to warm," Whitefish Lake Institute director Mike Koopal said. "Because of our low runoff year, fewer nutri-

ents were available to the algal community which quickly used them up and then died."

As a result, the lake saw an increase in water clarity.

Then the wildfires came, and with it, the smoke.

"Right now, the lake is get-

ting lots of nutrients from forest fire atmospheric deposition," Koopal explained.

He expects a second peak in algal production to be much higher than normal, ultimately lowering water clarity this fall.