



**LAGOON'S UGLY APPEARANCE:** If you live on the lagoon or have walked by it lately, you may have noticed areas of an unsightly scum floating on the surface. Like you, none of the board members is an expert on pools and lagoons, but this is what we have learned:

1. The bottom of the lagoon has **tons** of decaying organic compost material from years of leaves, dirt, bird droppings, etc., accumulating on the bottom. All of that heavier compost is covered by the lighter layer of calcium sediment from the calcium hypochlorite granular pool chemical used for years.
2. The new pool service company is using a chlorine chemical that is much more expensive and leaves no sediment. Unexpectedly, the new chemical seems to dissolve some of the calcium sediment. As a result, some portions of the lagoon's bottom surface that previously was completely coated with a layer of fine, white calcium is now being exposed.
3. The now-exposed lagoon bottom, which was once painted an attractive blue color, is now revealing its present state. Over the years chemicals, mineral deposits (primarily copper sulfate) and water erosion have caused the painted concrete surface to fade and deteriorate and copper sulfate has added an unattractive greenish tint (sort of like the color of this font). So the patchy drab green color you are seeing in areas is the actual lagoon's concrete color. For years that bottom has been covered by a fine layer of white calcium, hiding all the bottom's blemishes. Like an aging person, the wrinkles are now being exposed and cannot be hidden by makeup. There is nothing that can be done to change that appearance other than to drain the entire lagoon, remove all of the sediment and debris, re-paint the bottom surface and refill the lagoon. The cost of over a million gallons of water would be significant, let alone the cost to dredge and paint the bottom surface.
4. Chlorine is highly sensitive to sunlight, which quickly breaks down its chemical properties. But chlorine is what is necessary to prevent algae from forming. Liquid chlorine is most effective but is most expensive, hence why the old company was using the calcium hypochlorite.
5. Our new pool service has been trying out a new product recently. It is a blue-colored algaecide dye specifically designed for fish ponds and lagoons such as ours. The advantages are that it cuts down light transmission, which helps decrease the sunlight's penetrating effects and retards degradation of the chlorine in the water, and adds a pleasing blue tint to the water. However, an obvious unexpected side effect of this additive is that it is reacting with the decaying compost under the calcium sediment. That reaction is causing the compost to float to the surface of the lagoon. The surface compost can be skimmed and removed but some of the compost is floating up and then re-settling to the bottom.
6. Last week the pool service removed an estimated 800 pounds of that compost which had floated to the top of the lagoon. The lagoon looked good and the blue dye was pleasant. But a few days later, more compost floated to the top. Keep in mind that there is over a decade and more of compost and sediment on the bottom of the lagoon and that it may take months for the compost to float to the surface so it can be skimmed and removed.

Now here is why the board changed pool service companies in early April:

- The association had been using the same pool service company since about 1999. Earlier this year the board began soliciting new bids for pool/lagoon service. We also reviewed the existing contractor – under his contract, he was to brush, skim and vacuum the lagoon and keep the chemical levels in balance (in addition to maintaining the swimming pool and hot tub). While he infrequently was seen skimming leaves from the surface of the lagoon, no one has ever observed him brushing or vacuuming its bottom; hence the buildup of the compost on the bottom of the lagoon. For that we were charged monthly \$245 for the pool and \$2,200 for the lagoon (including chemicals).
- PowerStone asked him to detail the weekly hours he spent at our complex and the work he performed for us in order to evaluate whether we were getting good service for the cost. We tracked that company's hours for a few months and recorded that he spent about 1 to 1-1/2 hours at our complex each week, sometimes less. In response, the owner of the company informed our management company that over a 10 year period he had paid Paco and Ricardo over \$24,000 in non-reported cash payments to do some of the lagoon maintenance work for him (primarily skim the leaves, empty the trap baskets and put chemicals into the lagoon). In other words, he stated that he paid our workers additional compensation to do outside work for him during their normal paid association working hours.
- Before the board even had a chance to talk to our employees, Paco and Ricardo came to us to inform us that the pool company owner had approached them and asked them to confirm that he had been paying them off the books. They denied EVER being paid to do his work and we believe our workers. The only conclusion they reached was that he was trying to justify his monthly charges to the association.
- We also were informed that the previous company was using calcium hypochlorite in the lagoon and swimming pool to chlorinate the water. The advantage of calcium hypochlorite is that it is one of the cheapest chlorine products available but a main drawback is that it is granular and emits a calcium sediment when dissolved. It is also a very volatile and dangerous chemical. That chemical was directly dumped into the lagoon in granular form and when dissolved the calcium sediment would settle on the bottom.
- That same chemical was used in the swimming pool. The reason we don't see the sediment in the pool is because the pool company dumped the calcium hypochlorite into a large drum in the pool shack where the sediment settled out to the bottom of the drum and then the chlorinated water on top was siphoned off and circulated into the pool.
- None of the three vendors we had submit proposals to take over the lagoon maintenance recommended the use of this product because of the sediment it produces and its dangerous properties. After over a decade of use of this chemical, they all estimated that there are several tons of calcium sediment on the bottom of the lagoon. One company gave us a proposal of \$10,000 to remove the sediment.
- After reviewing several vendor proposals, the board decided to go with Blue Balance pool service. Our contract with Blue Balance is \$1,000 less per month than what we were paying our previous vendor, or a savings of \$12,000 per year. Whether the cost savings is worth the service we get will be constantly monitored by the board. But the board felt a change was necessary in view of the very limited hours the old company spent onsite, the rate he was overcharging the association for the work he did, and the fact that he tried to recruit our maintenance staff to claim he was paying them to do his work.

We all have to keep in mind that the new pool service is not creating the problem we all are observing. Instead their effort to clean up the lagoon is revealing the consequences of years of neglect, which unfortunately is causing an unpleasant appearance. That company is dealing with a situation we suspect few if any companies have ever faced.

The easy thing would have been for this board to retain our old pool service, continue to approve and over pay for the services we were receiving without question, close our eyes to an issue of deferred maintenance, and bury our heads in the calcium sediment at the bottom of the lagoon.

This board decided not to do that but to make changes we felt necessary to maintain the integrity and value of our complex for the future, to pare costs and expenses where possible, and to make most efficient use of our monthly assessments.

**TREE TRIMMING:** Tree trimming in our complex was completed the second week in May. The healthy trees are being thinned and topped where necessary. To preserve some trees, severe trimming is necessary to reduce the weight of upper limbs. The green heron's nests were not disturbed. The landscape committee will be looking into removing unhealthy trees or those whose roots are invading the sewer/drainage systems or uplifting walls and structures.