



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 22, 2026

Trump Blames Vandals After \$14.2 Million Reflecting Pool Renovation Turns Green and Peels

After a \$14.2 million renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool quickly produced a green algae bloom, peeling blue coating, and public embarrassment, President Donald Trump found his culprit: leftist vandals.

Officials have [reported](#) five arrests, five citations, and 14 police reports tied to alleged vandalism. But the public has yet to see evidence that vandals caused the central failures now visible in the newly revamped landmark.

Indeed, the explanation may be more mundane. But it may point back to the renovation itself, and to the basic physics, biology, and chemistry of warm water, algae, oxidizers, and fresh coating.



AP Images

The Accusations

In a series of posts on Truth Social over the past few days, Trump has turned the problems at the newly revamped landmark into a story of political sabotage, criminal depravity, and national insult. On Saturday night, he [announced](#) that U.S. Park Police had arrested “multiple individuals for vandalizing our Nation’s magnificent Reflecting Pool.”

Two hours later he [informed](#), “Many additional people have been arrested” for what he called “a true affront” to Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. He said they used “some form of knife or blade” to cut a “250 foot long gash” into the pool’s new facade. He also accused them of pouring “corrosive and destructive chemicals” into the water.

“Work will begin immediately” on the damage, the president [promised](#) on Sunday.

Earlier, on Friday, he had [pointed](#) to “Radical Left Lunatics, most likely Dumocats.” He also accused ABC reporter Jonathan Karl for “sticking his hand into the Pool, and trying to rip the rubber off of the surface.” And he [posted](#) a picture of a green-haired individual wearing “Team Algae” T-shirt walking by the Reflecting Pool.

On Sunday, U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro [said](#) her office would prosecute people caught damaging the pool. A former Olympian, David Hearn, was arrested “for a misdemeanor charge of destruction of government property.” That is according to the [Daily Mail](#) report Trump [reposted](#) that day. It reads:

A three-time Olympian canoeist was arrested for allegedly vandalizing President Donald Trump’s shining new Reflecting Pool in Washington, DC, but the athlete has claimed he merely touched it.



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Neither Trump nor Pirro presented the public with any evidence that vandals caused the central failures now visible in one of Washington's most photographed and guarded spaces.

Trump's Blue Pool

Trump [announced plans](#) to renovate the 2,028-foot Reflecting Pool in late April, calling its condition "filthy" and saying it had leakage problems.

In a [video](#) posted on Truth Social, the president said that he had contacted his own private contractors specializing in swimming pools to clean the stone and then coat it in a new color, which he described as "American flag blue." At that time, the water had already been drained.

He said the project would cost between \$1.5 million and \$2 million.

By late May, Trump had turned the project into an indictment of his predecessors. [He claimed](#) the Barack Obama and Joe Biden administrations had spent "hundreds of millions of dollars trying to get it to work," but failed. Multiple outlets reviewed the federal contracts and found no such spending.

By that time, the price tag for Trump's pool had [swelled](#) to "less than \$20 million."

The contracts drew scrutiny. Atlantic Industrial Coatings, a Virginia company that had previously done work at a Trump property, [received](#) a no-bid contract to waterproof and resurface the pool.

A second no-bid [contract](#) went to Green Water Solutions for an ozone nanobubble system meant to control algae. The company is owned through a trust headed by Trump donor John J. Cafaro.

Although Trump had boasted his personal connections on multiple occasions, on May 12 he appeared to try distance himself from the companies, [saying](#):

I didn't give out the contract, "Interior" did, to a contractor I did not know, and have never used before.

The pool was refilled on June 4.

By mid-June, the administration had declared success. Last Wednesday, the Interior Department [said](#) the pool was "crystal clear."



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U.S. Interior Press
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The advanced nanobubbler technology very effectively killed the algae that has plagued every Lincoln Reflecting Pool reopening—most infamously Obama's reopening—since 1922.

The Reflecting Pool water is crystal clear, and our National Park Service team is now vacuuming up the [Show more](#)



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But then the water began turning green.



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The Algae Arrives

The algae did not wait long. In fact, WIRED [reported](#),

algae began forming less than a day after the updated pool was unveiled last week.

After CNN spotted workers cleaning algae from the pool on June 10, it asked the Interior Department for an explanation. The department's communications director, Katie Martin, [told the](#) outlet that it was "residual algae" and a part of a "normal process." She added:

We are removing the algae, and the nanobubblers will maintain the pool and keep it algae free.

On June 14, Reuters photos showed National Park Service workers keep [clearing green growth](#). On June 16, the outlet posted pictures of the workers [pouring](#) hydrogen peroxide into the pool.

Quoting an analysis of the satellite data, *The Washington Post* [reported](#) last Thursday:

Days after the completion this month of a \$14 million renovation, the shallow water in the Lincoln Memorial's Reflecting Pool had more algae in it than at any recorded point in the month of June for at least five years.



The Washington Post 
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President Trump vowed to clean up what he called the “filthy” and “disgusting” water in the Reflecting Pool.

But the algae blooms that have long plagued the pool have come roaring back, spawning much debate about the \$14 million renovation. wapo.st/4a9lseL

The algae in the Reflecting Pool is back — and is at the highest levels in years



7:00 PM · Jun 18, 2026



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How could that happen? The explanation, again, was not especially exotic.

Among many other outlets, WIRED pointed first to the water source:



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The Reflecting Pool usually draws water from the nearby Tidal Basin, which is often filled with algae. During periods with high amounts of algae, the water supply switches to municipal drinking water.

Summer weather added another problem:

High temperatures create “a perfect storm for [algae] to bloom,” says Hans Paerl, a former professor at the University of North Carolina’s Institute of Marine Sciences. Stagnant water, Pearl says, makes the problem even worse. “Lakes and reservoirs around the world — they all have this problem during this time of year.”

At the same time, the dark blue color may have added another variable. Darker surfaces absorb more heat than lighter ones, and shallow water warms quickly.

That was the less-dramatic version of the chain of events. Warm water, sunlight, nutrients, and limited circulation can produce algae quickly. A freshly painted landmark does not get an exemption from biology.

Peeling Blue

On top of the algae bloom, the new “American Flag Blue” coating had begun to visibly peel last Thursday.

Paint was seen peeling from the floor of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, weeks after a \$14 million renovation that included a new color President Trump called “American Flag Blue.” pic.twitter.com/pCYznXR0FF

— CBS News (@CBSNews) [June 18, 2026](#)

The Washington Post [reported](#) on Saturday that the damage appeared after workers had spent days treating the algae. The report also noted:

It comes 16 days after the government began refilling the pool following a renovation that Trump had said would result in clean water and “could last for 100 years.”

As Trump accused vandals of using “corrosive chemicals,” commentators quickly pointed to the chemical already added to the water: hydrogen peroxide. A powerful oxidizer, it is used in water treatment to break down organic material and kill microorganisms.

That made sense as an algae treatment. But it also introduced a new variable into a freshly coated basin. Coatings are not all equally resistant to chemical exposure. Their performance can depend on formulation, surface preparation, cure time, temperature, water exposure, and chemical concentration.

That does not prove hydrogen peroxide alone caused the blue coating to peel. But peeling paint is not a mystery category. Coatings usually fail for ordinary reasons: poor surface preparation, insufficient curing time, trapped moisture, incompatible chemistry, heat, abrasion, or weak adhesion to the surface below. An oxidizer can add stress to that system.

In other words, the failure does not need a political motive.



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A national monument may be symbolic, but its coating is still material science.

The Guard

Once the blue coating began to peel, security around the pool tightened.

Newsweek [reported](#) Monday:

Visitors to the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool are being warned they could face detention for touching the water

Videos from the site showed uniformed personnel stationed around the pool's perimeter while cleaning work continued.

Half a dozen workers are removing the algae in the reflecting pool while being protected by National Guard. pic.twitter.com/bTw5Oj112X

— Wid Lyman (@Wid_Lyman) [June 20, 2026](#)

Trump had [already deployed](#) the National Guard to Washington in August 2025, under his broader law-and-order campaign in the capital. Guard members were assigned to support law enforcement and maintain a [visible presence](#) around federal sites, including the National Mall and the monuments.

That context complicates the vandalism narrative. The Reflecting Pool is one of the most visited landmarks in Washington, surrounded by tourists, cameras, police, Park Service personnel, and, recently, National Guard members. A 250-foot cut in the new surface would not have been a small act. It would have required time, access, and either unusual nerve or unusual luck.

It also likely would have required more than a few people, given the apparent scale of the damage. That does not make vandalism impossible. But it makes the allegation harder to accept without evidence, and worth testing against the obvious facts on the ground.



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