

Blue and clear—reflecting pool appearance shifts again in new images

By Alice Gibbs, June 6, 2023



The [Lincoln Memorial](#) Reflecting Pool appears blue and clear again in new images, marking a striking visual shift after weeks of controversy over algae blooms, [peeling coatings](#) and disputed claims of vandalism.

Recent images from live cameras and people on the ground show the [water](#) returning to the bright blue appearance promoted by the Trump administration earlier this month.

In side-by-side comparisons, footage from roughly six days ago—when murkier tones and visible patchiness were still evident—contrasts with clearer, more uniform water in the latest views.

The change comes as officials continue to attribute the pool's earlier issues to vandalism, even as publicly available evidence has not substantiated the most serious claims.

New Images Show Clearer Water

In widely shared social media videos, the pool appears visibly cleaner, with sunlight reflecting off a blue surface and improved clarity along the edges.

“UPDATE: Reflecting Pool water looks blue and clear on the west side of the pool,” journalist Oliya Scootercaster wrote on X alongside video showing visitors gathered along the edge and National Guard personnel nearby.

Another widely circulated post by journalist Nick Sortor described the pool as “absolutely beautiful,” adding that it now appears “AMERICAN FLAG BLUE—just like 47 planned.”

In the latest images, the pool is filled with rippling blue water, with the pool floor visible beneath the surface—imagery that contrasts sharply with the green discoloration seen earlier this month.

While such reactions highlight the change in appearance, they do not establish what caused either the earlier issues or the apparent improvement.

Problems Emerged Within Days of Reopening

The Reflecting Pool was resurfaced this spring with a swimming-pool-style coating that President Donald Trump dubbed “American flag blue,” part of a fast-tracked renovation he said would transform a “dirty and neglected” site.

In early June, the administration was presenting the project as effectively complete. But within days problems became visible.

By June 14, the water had turned [green due to an algae bloom](#), with officials attributing the issue to residual algae in supply systems before beginning chemical [treatments including hydrogen peroxide](#).

Experts told Newsweek the bloom could have had multiple contributing factors, including temperature changes linked to the darker coating.

“Darker surfaces can absorb more solar radiation and increase local water temperatures,” said Alla Silkina, an algal biotechnology expert at Swansea University. “This may create more favorable conditions for algal growth.”

Days later, on June 18, a second issue emerged: sections of the new blue coating appeared to peel from the pool floor.

R. Douglas Hooton, professor emeritus of civil and mineral engineering at the University of Toronto, said trapped moisture could be one explanation.

“Either the concrete was not sufficiently dry when the coating was applied, or that there is water rising up through the slab,” he told Newsweek. “Any trapped water will cause it to de-bond.”

Vandalism Claims and Ongoing Questions

As the problems became more visible, the Trump administration increasingly pointed to vandalism as the cause.

Trump has alleged that individuals used chemicals to trigger algae growth and cut a large “gash” into the pool lining—described at various points as 250 feet, 300 feet and later “350 ft ... in the form of lots of little slips.”

On Wednesday evening, [U.S. Park Police released video](#) as part of their investigation, asking the public to help identify a person seen near the Reflecting Pool on June 19.

The footage shows an individual kneeling at the water’s edge and reaching an arm into the pool, at one point appearing to pull at material beneath the surface. Authorities said the clip is tied to a “destruction of government property” probe, but the video does not appear to show anyone using tools, cutting the lining or introducing chemicals into the water.

Appearance Improves, Cause Remains Unclear

The latest images suggest that at least some of the visible problems—particularly the discoloration—may have been temporarily or partially resolved. What remains unclear is why.

Possible explanations include the ongoing chemical treatments, natural stabilization of the water system, or partial repairs to affected sections of the coating.

Federal officials have said they are continuing to treat the water and carry out maintenance work, with Trump indicating that some water may also be drained to allow for further repairs to the lining. However, authorities have not publicly detailed which specific interventions correspond to the improved appearance seen in recent footage.

A June 24 court filing from National Park Service Deputy Director Frank Lands states that officials plan to begin draining the reflecting pool after Independence Day to carry out repairs and assess damage to its lining.

Newsweek reached out to the Department of the Interior and the White House for comment.

Contact Newsweek editors on this story: [Tobias Meyjes](#) and [Emma Lee-Sang](#).