

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | August 23, 2019

Remain alert for blue-green algae

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) and North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) are reminding people to continue to be on the lookout for blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) in the state’s waterbodies. Blue-green algae can produce cyanotoxins which can make people and animals sick.

“As the summer season has progressed, the number of blue-green algae advisories and warnings has increased,” said Aaron Larsen, manager of NDDEQ’s Watershed Management Program. “We want the public to be aware of the health effects of exposure to blue-green algae.”

“Symptoms may include diarrhea and vomiting; numb lips, tingling fingers and toes; dizziness; or rashes, hives and skin blisters,” said Kirby Kruger, section chief for the NDDoH Medical Services Section. “There are no known antidotes and in severe cases, cyanotoxins can even cause death. Special consideration should be given to children since they are at higher risk because of their smaller size.”

The NDDEQ tests waterbodies for cyanotoxins and, if detected, issues public advisories and/or warnings. However, it can take time to receive test results, so people should avoid water that is discolored, scummy or smells bad. Currently, 15 lakes in North Dakota are posted with blue-green algae advisories. Three lakes — Harmon Lake in Morton County, Larson Lake in Hettinger County and Froelich Dam in Sioux County — are under warnings.

A warning means people and animals should avoid any contact with the water. With an advisory, recreationists are still able to use the lake but should avoid areas where algal blooms are present. The NDDEQ recommends the following:

- Do not swim, water ski or boat where water is discolored or there is foam, scum or algae mats.
- Do not let pets or livestock swim in or drink from these areas.
- Do not irrigate lawns or golf courses with scummy or smelly pond or lake water.
- While fish are safe to consume, always wash your hands with non-lake water immediately after catching fish. Wash the fish thoroughly with tap water before cleaning.

To learn more or to report blue-green algae blooms, call the Division of Water Quality at 701-328-5210, or visit https://deq.nd.gov/WQ/3_Watershed_Mgmt/8_HABS/Habs.aspx.

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