



Media Release

Harmful Algal Bloom Season Beginning in California's Lakes, Rivers and Streams

State Water Board Reminds Public to Be Aware of HABs

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SACRAMENTO -- With the summer season nearing and recreational activities about to ramp up on the state's lakes, rivers and streams, the State Water Board is reminding the public to be aware of harmful algal blooms (HABs).

Algae and cyanobacteria, the organisms that cause HABs, have existed for billions of years as essential components of freshwater ecosystems. But when certain conditions favor their growth - warm temperatures, stagnant water flows, excessive nutrient inputs - they can multiply very rapidly creating "blooms." These blooms can produce toxins, and taste and odor compounds, that pose health risks to humans and animals. When blooms pose a risk, they are referred to as harmful algal blooms (HABs).

While visiting your local lake or river, be aware that toxins can be present even though a bloom is not visible. Heed all advisory signs posted near water bodies. To check if a bloom was reported, contact the water manager or visit the [HAB Reports Map](#).

Dogs and children are most likely to be affected by HABs because of their smaller body size and tendency of playing in the water for longer periods. Dogs are especially susceptible because they swallow more water while swimming and during other activities like retrieving a ball from the water, and are less deterred by unsightly, smelly water that may contain harmful toxins.

It is important to distinguish cyanobacteria (often referred to as "blue-green algae") from green algae and other non-toxic water plants that are not thought to pose potential hazards to health. HABs can be a variety of colors such as green, white, red or brown and may look like thick paint floating on the water. Cyanobacteria blooms have a grainy, sawdust-like appearance of individual colonies.



Green algae



Aquatic plant



Cyanobacteria bloom

People can help prevent blooms in our waters by taking the following measures:

- Properly maintain septic systems
- Use phosphate-free dishwasher detergent
- Be conservative with use of water, fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn, garden or small farm
- Pick up pets' waste
- Plant or maintain native vegetation around the water's edge

The California Water Boards recommend that people practice healthy water habits while enjoying the outdoors this summer at your local lake, river or stream:

- Heed all instructions on posted advisories if present
- Avoid algae and scum in the water and on the shore
- Keep an eye on children and pets (dogs)
- If you think a HAB is present, do not let pets and other animals go into or drink the water, or eat scum/algae accumulations on the shore
- Don't drink the water or use it for cooking
- Wash yourself, your family and your pets with clean water after water play
- If you catch fish, throw away guts and clean fillets with tap water or bottled water before cooking
- Avoid eating shellfish if you think a HAB is present

To report blooms, please visit the [CA HABs Portal](#).

For more information, including what to look for, please visit: California Harmful Algal Blooms Portal at <http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/>