



Media Release

News Release

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

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Blue-green algae blooms in Klamath River and Reservoirs result in warning against water contact or use

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Sacramento –Swimmers, boaters and recreational users are to urged to avoid direct contact with or use of waters containing blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), now blooming in the Klamath River in Northern California.

Copco and Iron Gate Reservoirs and the Klamath River below Iron Gate Dam down to Weitchpec on the Yurok Reservation are now posted with health advisories warning against human and animal contact with the water. Residents and recreational water users can still enjoy camping, hiking, biking, canoeing, picnicking, or other recreational activities at the reservoirs and along the Klamath River, taking precautions to avoid contact with waters near these bloom areas and any scums along the water's edge.

Klamath River reaches from the I-5 bridge downstream to Weitchpec were posted with health advisories on July 30 and 31, based on the presence of cyanobacteria scums. Copco Reservoir was posted in June due to cell counts exceeding public health thresholds for cyanobacteria (*Anabaena* and then *Microcystis aeruginosa*). Iron Gate was posted on July 25th due to scums as public health thresholds; these advisories remain in effect.

“These conditions in the Klamath River and reservoirs today are very concerning. Blue-green algae can pose health risks, particularly to children and pets,” said Matt St. John, Executive Officer of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. “We urge people and their pets to avoid contact with water in locations with blooms, and particularly avoid swallowing or inhaling of water spray in an algal bloom area.”

The algal blooms appear as bright green in the water, and blue-green, white or brown foam, scum or mats can float on the water and accumulate along the shore. Recreational exposure to toxic blue-green algae can cause eye irritation, allergic skin rash, mouth ulcer, vomiting,

diarrhea, and cold and flu-like symptoms. Liver failure, nerve damage and death have occurred in rare situations where large amounts of contaminated water were directly ingested.

The [Statewide Guidance on Harmful Algal Blooms](#) recommends the following for blue-green algae impacted waters:

- Take care that pets and livestock do not drink the water, swim through algae, scums or mats, or lick their fur after going in the water. Rinse pets in clean drinking water to remove algae from fur.
- Avoid wading, swimming or jet or water skiing in water containing algae blooms or scums or mats.
- Do not drink, cook or wash dishes with untreated surface water from these areas under any circumstances; common water purification techniques (e.g., camping filters, tablets and boiling) do not remove toxins.
- People should not eat mussels or other bivalves collected from these areas. Limit or avoid eating fish; if fish are consumed, remove guts and liver, and rinse filets in clean drinking water.
- Get medical treatment immediately if you think that you, your pet, or livestock might have been poisoned by blue-green algae toxins. Be sure to alert the medical professional to the possible contact with blue-green algae.

Water quality monitoring is done biweekly in the summer from Link River Dam in Oregon to the Klamath River estuary in California. Sampling continues late into the fall to determine when toxin levels are low enough for water contact to be safely below the public health thresholds. This sampling is conducted collaboratively by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; PacifiCorp; the Karuk Tribe; the Yurok Tribe the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and U.S. EPA. These postings are supported by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), Department of Public Health, as well as the U.S. EPA, and the Yurok and Karuk Tribes.

Water users are encouraged to check most recent sampling results on the Klamath Blue-Green Algae Tracker (see link below). Even when blue-green algae blooms are not present, still carefully watch young children and warn them not to swallow the water.

For more information, please visit:

California Department of Public Health:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/environhealth/water/Pages/Bluegreenalgae.aspx>

State Water Resources Control Board

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/bluegreen_algae/

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment:

<http://oehha.ca.gov/ecotox/microcystins.html>

Klamath Blue-Green Algae Tracker



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<http://www.kbmp.net/maps-data/blue-green-algae-tracker>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

<http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/standards/criteria/nutrients/cyanoabs.cfm>

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