

Public Health Cautions Residents of Potentially Harmful Algal Blooms in Kern Waterways

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Kern County, CA – With the summer season upon us and recreational activities on Kern County waterways expected to increase, Kern County Public Health Services is urging residents to be mindful of potentially harmful algal blooms (HABs) in lakes and rivers, and to keep children and pets away from blooms. Public Health will be utilizing multiple screening tools to locate potentially harmful blooms and post advisory signs as needed.

Effective immediately, Kern County Public Health Services is issuing a water contact advisory for Kissack Cove and Paradise Cove at Lake Isabella. Health advisory signs will be posted this week that advise recreational users to use caution and avoid contact with water in these designated areas. Water testing performed by the State of California Water Resources Control Board indicated the presence of potentially harmful blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) in these areas of Lake Isabella.

Increased water temperatures, slow moving water and excessive nutrients or organic matter cause cyanobacteria and some algae to rapidly multiply and form HABs. These HABs are blooms of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) and are capable of producing toxins, which have the potential to cause significant health concerns. Cyanobacteria are small microbes that live in nearly every habitat on land and in the water.

Be aware that cyanobacteria toxins can be present even though a bloom is not visible. HABs vary in color and may range from vibrant to dark green, blue-green, yellow, brown, black, or red. Not all HABs will appear on the water's surface as some are at the bottom of a waterbody, and others float at various depths. Dogs, wildlife and children are most likely to be affected because of their smaller body size and tendency to stay in the water for longer periods of time.

Recreational exposure to cyanobacteria and associated toxins can cause eye irritation, skin rash, mouth ulcers, vomiting, diarrhea and cold or flu-like symptoms. Pets can be especially susceptible because they tend to drink while in the water and lick their fur after, increasing their risk of exposure and illness. Symptoms of animal illness include: vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, abnormal liver function test results, difficulty breathing, foaming at the mouth, muscle twitching and sometimes death.

Remember to always practice healthy water habits:

- Heed all instruction on posted advisory signs.
- Avoid body contact with algae blooms.
- Keep an eye on children and dogs, ensuring that they do not approach areas with algae blooms.

- Do not drink untreated lake or river water. Common water purification techniques such as camping filters, tablets and boiling do not remove toxins.
- Do not cook or wash dishes with lake or river water.
- Wash yourself, your family, and your pets with clean water after swimming in lake or river.
- Consume fish only after cleaning and preparing thoroughly.

For more information visit: <http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/> or <http://www.kernpublichealth.com>

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