Vol. 14, No. 33

YOUR HOMETOWN WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Water warning signs go up around town

Officials still working on algae solution

by Dawnmarie Fehr Correspondent

Since the county released information last month that the waters of Discovery Bay had tested positive for cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae blooms, 'Danger' and 'Caution' signs have sprung up along certain public access bays in town, including the marina. But now, local residents are wondering what comes next.

Contra Costa County Director of Environmental Health Dr. Marilyn Underwood, who appeared at the Discovery Bay Community Services District (CSD) meeting last week, tried to address those concerns.

"We are still learning about the algae and trying to figure out what to do," Underwood said. "We are urging people to be cautious. The best advice we can give is to proceed with caution in how you interact with the water. This will die off, but the toxins will be released still when the algae die, so give it some time (before getting in the water) after you see it go away."

As of this week, two types of signs have been posted. 'Danger' signs are posted in areas where the toxins were more concentrated. and 'caution' signs in areas where the toxins were less concentrated.

"The main concern with a caution sign is not to get the water in your mouth, though it can cause skin irritation on contact," Underwood said. "You can eat fish caught in 'caution,' but not in 'danger.' Boiling doesn't do anything to the toxins, so don't try to drink or cook with the water."

Contra Costa County Supervisor Mary Piepho is concerned about the algae, but not worried.

"This isn't just a Delta issue," Piepho said. "This is also a state and national issue; it's happening everywhere. There is a concern, but we need to be smart. We can make a choice about whether we get in the water or not. (The algae) is pretty visible."

Piepho attended a meeting last week between local authorities including the Reclamation 800 District and the County Health Department.

"We are working on community awareness that the best plan is to stay out of the water altogether, including pets, until conditions change and the algae bloom dissipates," Piepho said. "A plan is being developed to continue testing this year, as well as how we can mobilize and be prepared for next year should the blooms reappear."

see Algae page 14A



Photo by Dawnmarie Fehr

Warning signs, such as this one at the marina in Discovery Bay, alert residents to the recent situation regarding the positive testing of blue-green algae in the area.

Community park coming to EMS

by Dawnmarie Fehr Correspondent

Excelsior Middle School (EMS) will be breaking ground on Byron's first recreational area next month.

Thanks to Measure WW, which was passed by voters in November 2008, the East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD) was able to grant \$600,000 to the Byron Union School District (BUSD) to build a park on four empty acres currently attached to EMS at the corner of Byer Road and Byron Highway.

"This is huge; it's wonderful for our stu-

This is huge; it's wonderful for our students and the whole community.

> Debbie Gold BUSD Superintendent

dents and the whole community," said BUSD Superintendent Debbie Gold.

The park, which will include an allabilities playground and an educational and interpretive center, will have a farm theme, befitting its agricultural surroundings. The building will be modeled after a conventional red barn and include a workshop, educational area, and viewing gallery.

Gold took on the task of applying for the grant herself. Starting last year, she began filling out the application and sketching the design for the park.

"I just wrote out that we wanted something for our students and the community," said Gold. "I wanted to have an all-abilities playground, because I have always had a focus on special-needs children in my work,

see Park page 14A



and g results

is important to note that lead is sent in the pipes that move water the community, and the CCWD's uality team is constantly monitormanaging water in the system to corrosion.

r the district, regulations required 50 residents to participate in the to determine what levels of lead pper are in the drinking water at me. Residents are selected based in the home was constructed as umbing codes did allow for lead older and fixtures. Results from 64 all came in below current regula-

more information, visit www.

he county received the funds from district, and we worked with the ors to identify projects within the hat qualified," Solseng said. "This iting park; I think it's really great. did a fantastic job. The all-abilities nd is a great, inclusive feature." the construction is finished, which for November 2018, district staff intain the grounds and building. looking forward to putting the to good use.

Algae from page 1A

Dan Gay, harbor master at the Discovery Bay Yacht Harbor, and Jeff Conway, district manager of Reclamation 800 District, both acknowledge that while the algae can be a nuisance, there is no reason to give up on the Delta completely.

"There is one small area in the marina that they are marking, and you're not allowed to swim there anyway," Gay said. "We put an aerator in there, and that cleared the water up a lot. We haven't seen a drop in traffic."

Conway has been at his post for 20 years. He said he's seen this happen before.

"This isn't new," Conway said. "(It) happens every year. I spoke with the Regional Water Quality Control Board about this issue and asked if it was a problem isolated in this area, and they said no. They also said it was one of the worst years for blue-green algae ever."

Underwood agrees that the algae is a

"We can do all kinds of things in there," she said. "Science experiments and nature classes, and we hope to have 4H shows in the future."

New EMS principal Paul Gengler has hopes for the park as well.

"In a previous district, my school had a tremendous Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization established," Gengler said. "It was the largest program at school, with over 65 percent of the students participating in grades nine through 12. At yearly occurrence but added that this year the test results came back much higher than the year before.

There are several reasons the algae is so bad in the Delta this year, including low rainfall over the last four years, several weeks of temperatures hitting more than 100 degrees, light winds and excess nutrients in the water, all of which combine to form the perfect storm. Going forward, the county does plan to test more areas of the water, and the Discovery Bay Community Foundation is working with the health department to facilitate more testing, though no specific plan has been created yet.

If you think you may be suffering from contact with blue-green algae blooms, contact the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222. For more information, visit http://goo.gl/18LOF1 or call the Contra Costa Environmental Health line at 925-692-2500.

To comment, visit www.thepress.net.

the middle school, we developed a feeder program to the high school. My hope is to work with Liberty High School to see what type of elective feeder program we could design that would interest our students and, at the same time, connect our students to their very successful FFA program."

The groundbreaking ceremony will be held Sept. 30. Details will be announced closer to the event.

For more information, call 925-809-7500.



ar and Grill Great View! be Delta!

We're With You

Multi-State Insurer Providing the Best Coverage that Fits Your Needs Commercial Insurance General Liability Inland Marine Workers Compensation Property Coverage Surety Bonds