



Media Release

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
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<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast>

State Warns Against Blue-Green Algae in Klamath River

*Contact with blue-green algae can cause eye irritation, skin rash
Caution urged when recreating and consuming fish*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sacramento – Due to its potential health risks, federal, state, and tribal agencies are urging swimmers, boaters and recreational users to avoid contact with blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) now blooming in the Klamath River, downstream of Iron Gate Dam, in Northern California. Water in the Klamath River downstream of the dam to just below the Interstate 5 Bridge has exceeded public health criteria; these areas have been posted with health advisories warning against human and animal contact with the water.

Recent monitoring indicates that levels of cyanobacteria downstream of the I-5 bridge are also increasing (*but are currently below the state's action levels*); water users are encouraged to use caution, and check most recent sampling results on the Klamath Blue-Green algae Tracker (*see link below*).

"As blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) can pose health risks, especially to children and pets, we urge people to be careful where they swim," said Matt St. John, Executive Officer of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. "We recommend that people and their pets avoid contact with the blooms, and particularly avoid swallowing or inhaling water spray in an algal bloom area."

Cyanobacteria (*Microcystis aeruginosa*) cell counts in Klamath River waters below Iron Gate Dam exceeded the public health advisory threshold during recent public health monitoring. Based upon earlier monitoring results, Iron Gate and Copco Reservoirs were posted with health advisories in July. California agencies including the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), CA Department of Public Health, as well as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Yurok and Karuk Tribes urge residents and recreational water users to use caution or avoid getting in the water near these blooms.

Public health monitoring for the Klamath River from Link River Dam in Oregon to the estuary in California (including Copco and Iron Gate Reservoirs) is conducted collaboratively by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, PacifiCorp, the Karuk Tribe, the Yurok Tribe, and the CA

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and United States Environmental Protection Agency.

The algal blooms appear as very green water, and blue-green, white or brown foam, scum or mats floating on the water. 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.

“This is a situation that anyone who comes into contact with water in algal bloom areas should be aware of,” said St. John. “Vacationers and the public should adjust their activities accordingly.”

The Statewide Guidance on Harmful Algal Blooms recommends the following:

- Avoid wading and swimming in water containing visible blooms or water containing algae, scums or mats.
- If no algae, scums or mats are visible, you should still carefully watch young children and warn them not to swallow the water.
- Do not drink, cook or wash dishes with untreated surface water under any circumstances; common water purification techniques (e.g., camping filters, tablets) may not remove toxins.
- People should limit or avoid eating fish. If fish are consumed, remove guts and liver, and rinse meat in clean drinking water.
- Take care that pets and livestock do not drink the water or swim through heavy algae, scums or mats, nor lick their fur after going in the water. Rinse pets in clean drinking water to remove algae from fur.
- 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.

With proper precautions to avoid water contact, people can still visit Klamath River and enjoy camping, hiking, biking, canoeing, picnicking, or other recreational activities, excluding direct contact with the waters impacted by algal blooms.

For more information, please visit the following resources:

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/

CA Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment:

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



Klamath Blue-Green Algae Tracker

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

US Environmental Protection Agency

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

Siskiyou County Public Health Department:

(530) 841-2100

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