



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Recreational users of the Russian River are encouraged to take precautions

Santa Rosa, CA - August 21, 2015 - The Environmental Health & Safety Section (EHS) of the Department of Health Services and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board are encouraging recreational users of the Russian River to take precautions and practice health and safety when swimming and playing at public beaches along the River on August 21st.

[Russian River: Blue Green Algae Status Update](#) posted November 4, 2015

[For veterinarians: please read this health advisory](#)

The enhanced promotion of healthy water habits by EHS and NCRWQCB officials is prompted by recent reports of large amounts of blue-green algae and toxins mixed in with otherwise harmless filamentous algae.

Algae, including blue-green algae, is a normal inhabitant in many water environments. Warm weather and abundant nutrients can cause algae to grow more rapidly than usual and create algal mats. Drought and summer conditions are contributing to the algal blooms in the Russian River. Blue-green algae, do not produce toxins. Some species of blue-green algae have the ability to produce toxins that can create health effects for humans and animals. It is important to note that although some species of blue-green algae can produce toxins, they do not do so all the time.

Comprehensive monitoring for harmful algal blooms in a body of water with ever changing conditions is ongoing. Therefore, county health and water quality board officials are encouraging precautions along the river.

Algal blooms can look like green, blue-green, white, or brown foam, scum or mats floating in the water. For safety, it is best to stay away from algal mats. If toxin is present, dogs and children can be affected. Children are vulnerable because they play in shoreline areas, drink more water than adults, and are of small body size. Dogs are especially vulnerable because they tend to lick algae off their fur.

Blue-green algae toxins can cause a variety of symptoms including contact irritation (e.g., eye irritation, skin), gastro-intestinal symptoms (e.g., abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, liver inflammation), and neurologic symptoms (e.g., muscle tremors, seizures, difficulty breathing).

The following are recommended healthy water habits for recreational users of the Russian River:

- Do not drink river water;
- Do not cook or wash dishes with river water;
- Avoid algal scums or mats, which are found most often along the shore line;
- Even if algae is not present, carefully watch young children and warn them not to swallow water;
- Do not let pets drink the water, swim through scums or mats, play near scums or mats or drink water after contact with scums or mats;
- Wash yourself, your family and your pets with clean water after river play;

- Consume fish only after removing guts and liver, and rinsing fillets in clean water; discard
- Get medical attention immediately if you think that you, your family, or your pet might be sure to tell the medical professional about possible contact with blue-green algae.

Public Contact Information:

If you have concerns regarding your or your family's health, contact your healthcare provider regarding your pet's health, contact your veterinarian.

For questions regarding the status of the Russian River go to the websites listed below or call (707) 565-6552.

Sonoma County Department of Health, Environmental Health and Safety: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/services/bluegreen.asp>

The following websites provide more information on blue-green algae and harmful algal blooms:

California Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/environhealth/water/Pages/Bluegreenalgae.aspx>

State Water Resources Control Board: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/

Center for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/algalblooms/>

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