



Media Release

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

Health Advisories Posted for High Levels of Blue-Green Algae in Spring Lake

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Santa Rosa –State and county agencies are urging swimmers, boaters and recreational users to avoid contact with blue-green algae now blooming in Spring Lake located in Spring Lake Regional Park in Santa Rosa, CA. The lake has been posted with advisories warning of any contact with the water because of possible toxins associated with the algae.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and California agencies including the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), and Sonoma County Department of Health Services urge residents and recreational water users of Spring Lake to use caution or avoid getting in the water near these blooms until health advisory posting signs have been removed.

Blue-green algae can pose serious health risks. People and their pets should avoid contact with the blooms, and particularly avoid swallowing or inhaling water spray in an algal bloom area.

The algal blooms look like green, 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, cold and flu-like symptoms, tingling, headaches, numbness and shaking, and convulsions. 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 at Spring Lake should be aware of. Vacationers and the public should adjust their activities accordingly”, said Matt St. John, Executive Officer, North Coast Regional Water Board. Algal toxins have been detected in northern California fish in past years; “Until monitoring is conducted to determine the level of toxins in fish, people should limit or avoid eating fish caught in areas of a water body where a bloom exists. The precautions that we are recommending are reasonably simple and based on common sense,” St. John said.

The Statewide Guidance on Harmful Algal Blooms recommends the following:

- Avoid wading and swimming in water containing visible blooms or water containing algal scums or mats;
- If no algal 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 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 right away 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.

For more information, please visit:

California Department of Public Health:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/vironhealth/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>