Health Advisory Issued for Black Lake

KOOTENAI CO., ID -- Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have issued a health advisory for Black Lake, near Medimont, due to the presence of blue-green algae. This is the fourth Kootenai County lake impacted by blue-green algae in 2015. The health advisory for Fernan Lake is still active at this time.

Blue-green algae can produce potentially dangerous toxins. People recreating near Black Lake are advised to avoid swallowing or inhaling water and to avoid direct contact with water containing visible algae. Drinking water from the lake is especially dangerous and the toxins cannot be removed by boiling or filtering the water. Children and pets are particularly susceptible to illness related to blue-green algae. If people choose to eat fish from the lake, it is recommended that they remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking since toxins are more likely to collect in those tissues.
Blue-green algae blooms are naturally occurring, microscopic bacteria. The physical appearance can be unsightly, often causing thick green mats along shorelines. Many species occur in Idaho surface waters and only some species release toxins under certain conditions. Harmful algae blooms occur in water conditions of optimal temperature, oxygen, and when nitrogen is unavailable and phosphorus is abundant. Often excess nutrients associated with algae blooms are caused by pollution from human activities. These circumstances are most common during the warmer summer months and in this case, the warmer autumn months.

The public will be advised when the concern no longer exists and may contact DEQ at (208) 769-1422 to report any concerns. Water quality improvements can be expected to reduce future algae blooms. DEQ is working with residents and landowners to implement nutrient reduction projects.

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