



# Panhandle Health District

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

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**Panhandle Health District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Melanie Collett

(208) 415-5108

## **UPDATE: Blue-green Algae Advisory Expanded for Fernan Lake**



**KOOTENAI CO., ID** – The current health advisory for Fernan Lake has been expanded by Panhandle Health District (PHD) and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The [advisory](#) was initially issued due to high concentrations of blue-green algae on the east side of the lake, which has now spread, impacting the entire lake. PHD is urging the public to use caution when recreating in or near the water.

Blue-green algae are naturally-occurring, microscopic bacteria. Harmful algal blooms (HABs) typically occur during the warm summer months, when toxin-producing algae proliferate under certain oxygen and nutrient conditions. The physical appearance of blue-green algal blooms can be unsightly, often presenting in discolored water, streaks or globs of scum and causing thick green mats along lake shorelines.

Anyone recreating near Fernan Lake is advised to take precautions and prevent people and pets from exposure to lake water appearing to contain blue-green algae. Property owners utilizing the lake as a drinking water source are cautioned that potentially present toxins cannot be removed by boiling or filtering the water. If contact (swimming, bathing, or showering) has been made with water containing blue-green algae, it is recommended to wash off with fresh water. Recreational contact with water that is not visibly affected by a blue-green algae bloom is not expected to cause adverse health effects.

If people choose to eat fish from this area, it is recommended that they remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking, since toxins are more likely to collect in those tissues.

Symptoms of exposure to algal toxins vary according to exposure. Symptoms include rashes, hives, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, and/or wheezing. More severe symptoms affecting the liver and nervous system may result from ingestion of water. If symptoms persist, consult with your health care provider.

A blue-green health [advisory](#) is also currently active along the northern arm of Hayden Lake in Kootenai County. The public will be advised when the concerns no longer exists. DEQ is working with residents and landowners to implement nutrient reduction projects to improve overall water quality and limit the frequency and duration of these algal blooms.

Updated information on harmful algae blooms in northern Idaho can be found online at <http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/blue-green-algae/>.

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