Health Advisory Issued for Spicer Pond

ST. MARIES, ID -- Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have issued a health advisory for Spicer Pond in Benewah County.

Water quality monitoring confirmed the presence of cyanobacteria, commonly known as blue-green algae. Blue-green algal blooms have the potential to produce dangerous toxins. Pets, children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems are most at-risk of harmful exposure.
Spicer Pond is a popular family fishing area, so PHD is urging the public to use caution when recreating in or near the water. If people choose to eat fish from the pond, 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 are naturally-occurring, microscopic bacteria. 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 shorelines.

Anyone recreating near Spicer Pond is advised to take precautions to avoid exposure to pond water appearing to contain blue-green algae. If contact (swimming) has been made with water containing blue-green algae, it is recommended to wash off with fresh water.

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.

The public will be advised when the concern no longer exists. DEQ is working with residents, landowners and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game 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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