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Panhandle Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Advisory Issued for Fernan Lake



(Algae along the shores of Fernan Lake on July 16, 2018)

KOOTENAI CO., ID -- Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have issued a health advisory for Fernan Lake. PHD and DEQ are urging the public to use caution when recreating in or near the water, especially where ingestion is a risk.

Water quality monitoring confirmed the presence of cyanobacteria, also known as a harmful algae bloom (HAB). HABs have the potential to produce dangerous toxins in areas of the lake. The physical appearance of these blooms can be unsightly, often presenting in discolored water, streaks or globs of scum and causing thick green mats along lake shorelines. Pets, children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems are most at-risk of harmful exposure.

“These scums should be avoided,” said Kristin Larson, Water Quality Analyst for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. “There is scum formation at the east side boat ramp and visible cyanobacterial colonies over the rest of the lake that have been lab identified.”

Anyone recreating near Fernan Lake is advised to take precautions to avoid exposure to lake water appearing to contain a HAB. 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 a HAB, it is recommended to wash off with fresh water.

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.

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 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/recreation-health-advisories/cyanobacteria-harmful-algal-blooms/>. Also, follow www.facebook.com/PanhandleHealth/ for updates.

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