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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHD Contact: Katherine Hoyer
(208) 415-5108

DEQ Contact: Robert Steed
(208) 769-1422

PHD & DEQ Advise Caution on Lake Cocolalla due to Probable Harmful Algal Bloom



Lake Cocolalla September 2020

BONNER CO., ID -- Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) advise the public to use caution when recreating in or near the water at Lake Cocolalla due to a probable harmful algal bloom (HAB).

Bob Steed, surface water ecologist with DEQ, observed the HAB on Lake Cocolalla Friday after receiving a complaint from visitors to the lake.

“After observing the water, I’m confident that this is consistent with a HAB,” Steed said. “Due to the holiday weekend, the sample that we took of the water will not be confirmed until Tuesday. Recreators on the lake should proceed with caution this weekend.”

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.

Anyone recreating near Lake Cocolalla 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.

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/>.

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