



Public Health Brief

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Danger:

Blue-Green Algae Toxins Detected in Indian Creek Reservoir

Lake Users Advised to avoid Water Contact at Indian Creek Reservoir

The Alpine County Health Department has been working with The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and South Tahoe Public Utility District and the Alpine Watershed Group (AWG) in determining that there are levels of toxin associated with blooms of blue-green algae in multiple lakes in Alpine County that are toxic to animals and humans.

Samples have been collected from Red Lake and Heenan Reservoir which have shown no toxins are present at this time requiring no advisories.

Levels at Indian Creek Reservoir have been determined to be well above the “DANGER” level. The lake is being posted with the appropriate warning signs in effect until further notice. Ongoing testing will be conducted on a regular basis. My prediction (always risky but based on evidence!) is that conditions will get worse before they get better. My hypothesis is that significant amounts of ash from the Tamarack Fire surrounding the lake have been washed into the lake with each rain event this winter and spring creating a nutrient rich environment facilitating growth of the algae.

Potential symptoms in dogs following exposure to blue-green algae toxins can include lethargy, difficulty breathing, salivation, vomiting, urination, diarrhea, or convulsions leading to death. The unexplained death of a dog after contact with contaminated water is often a sentinel event which alerts officials to the potential of a toxic bloom. People can experience eye irritation, skin rash, mouth ulcers, vomiting, diarrhea, and cold or flu-like symptoms, with impacts to the liver. Dogs and children are most likely to be affected because of their smaller body size and tendency to stay in the water for longer periods. While there is no antidote for exposures, persons should see their physician and



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Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281

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those with pets which may have been exposed should go to their veterinarian for supportive care. Livestock who are drinking contaminated water can also suffer fatal consequences.

Blue-green algae (known as cyanobacteria) can be naturally present in any body of fresh water. It looks like green, blue-green, white or brown scum, foam or mats floating on the water. Warmer air and water temperatures, high nutrient levels, and slow and stagnant water can cause cyanobacteria to multiply at an excessive rate and turn in to a harmful algae bloom (HAB). When HABs are present, the algal scum can be a variety of colors such as fluorescent blue, green white, red or brown. Blooms can have more than one color present and may look like thick paint floating on the water and give off a foul odor. HABs may move to different locations of the lake by wind or wave. If you see signs of a HAB, such as discolored, pea-green water, surface scum, floating algae, **stay out of the water**.

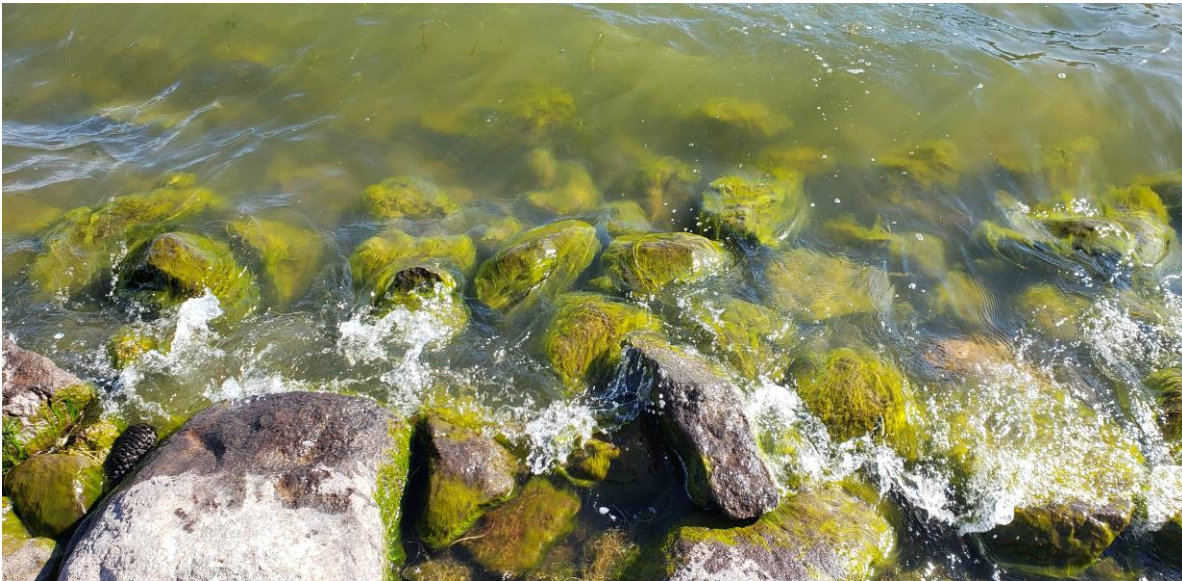
A few good links:

[State Incident Report Map](#), where you can see updates on blooms across the State

[Healthy Water Habits](#) page on the [CA HABs Portal](#).

The State Water Board and the nine Regional Water Boards (known as the Water Boards), in partnership with other programs and agencies, are actively supporting and coordinating a statewide HAB incident response with many publicly available resources. To learn how to stay safe around HABs, report a bloom and more, visit the CA HABs Portal: <http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/>

Follow them on twitter: @CaWaterBoards



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DANGER

Toxins from algae in this water can harm people and kill animals



**Stay out of the water until further notice.
Do not touch scum in the water or on shore.**



Do not let pets or other animals drink or go into the water or go near the scum.



Do not eat fish or shellfish from this water.



Do not use this water for drinking or cooking.
Boiling or filtering will not make the water safe.

For people, the toxins can cause:

- Skin rashes, eye irritation
- Diarrhea, vomiting

For animals, the toxins can cause:

- Diarrhea, vomiting
- Convulsions and death

Contact your doctor or veterinarian if you or your pet get sick after going in the water.

For more information on harmful algae go to <https://mywaterquality.ca.gov/habs/index.html>

For local information contact:

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