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### **North Dakota Department of Health Rescinds Blue-green Algae Advisories for Cottonwood Lake and Harvey Reservoir**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) and Agriculture (NDDA), Animal Health Division, have rescinded the blue-green algae advisories previously issued for Cottonwood Lake, located near Alamo in Williams County (on Aug. 1), and Harvey Reservoir, located near Harvey in Wells County (on Aug. 12) due to high levels of microcystin in the water. Microcystin is a cyanotoxin caused by blue-green algae. When present in water, cyanotoxins are dangerous for both people and animals.

The NDDoH has been monitoring each of these lakes since the advisories were posted and results from samples collected this week show concentrations to be well below the NDDoH health risk threshold of 10 µg/L (parts per billion). “With the cooler temperatures the last couple of weeks we have seen a significant reduction in the number and severity of blue-green algae blooms across the state. The lower concentrations of microcystin that we have seen in Cottonwood Lake and Harvey Reservoir are examples of that improvement,” says Mike Ell with the NDDoH Division of Water Quality.

While the advisories have been rescinded for Cottonwood Lake and Harvey Reservoir, the public is reminded that advisories and warnings are still in effect for several lakes and reservoirs across the state and that blue-green algae blooms may still occur on lakes and wetlands not currently listed. For a list of current advisories and warnings, go to the NDDoH Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/WQ/SW/HABs/defaultHABs.htm>.

The production of blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, often happens during periods of warm weather in bodies of water that are used by people, pets, and livestock, including lakes and wetlands used for hunting. Exposure from ingesting affected water can cause illness in people and animals, and can result in death. There are no known antidotes for the toxins. State health officials urge the public to avoid contact with or swallowing water affected by blue-green algae, and to protect their pets and livestock from waters that are affected.

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Blue-green algae discolor the water they live in, and can cause foam, scum or mats to appear on the surface. People and animals that swallow water containing cyanotoxins can become sick with severe diarrhea and vomiting; numb lips, tingling fingers and toes; dizziness; or rashes, hives or skin blisters. Children are at higher risk than adults for illness because their smaller size can allow them to get a relatively larger dose of toxin.

Please take the following steps to avoid exposure to cyanotoxins:

- Respect any advisories announced by public health authorities. If you see posted signs or hear messages to stay out of a certain body of water, respect the warning.
- Do not swim, water ski, or boat in areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum, or mats of green or blue-green algae on the water.
- If you accidentally swim in water that might have a cyanobacteria bloom, rinse off with fresh water as soon as possible.
- Do not let pets or livestock swim in or drink from areas where the water is discolored or where you see foam, scum, or mats of algae on the water.
- If pets (especially dogs) swim in scummy water, rinse them off immediately – do not let them lick the algae (and toxins) off their fur.
- Don't irrigate lawns or golf courses with pond water that looks scummy or smells bad.

For more information on public health issues, contact Mike Ell, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.220.5025, or Susan Keller, State Veterinarian, at 701.328.2655.

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