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Algae brings Tualatin River health advisory

A health advisory prompted by high levels of harmful algae found in the Tualatin River was issued on July 12 by the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS). The health advisory is in effect for portions of the river in eastern Washington County and western Clackamas County, Ore., from Jurgens Park to the confluence with the Willamette River.

Water sampling in the Tualatin River has confirmed the presence of harmful toxin-producing algae called Anabaena. The high density of algae may be associated with dangerous toxin concentrations in the water, according to World Health Organization guidelines.

People should avoid swimming or wading in the water. Avoid other recreational activities such as waterskiing or wakeboarding that could result in swallowing or inhaling water droplets during harmful algae blooms. Children and pets are particularly susceptible. Do not allow dogs to drink the water.

People who come into contact with algae and experience symptoms of numbness, tingling, dizziness, difficulty breathing or heart problems should seek immediate medical attention. People experiencing symptoms of skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting should also seek medical attention if symptoms persist or worsen.

There are unconfirmed reports that the bloom is subsiding. Additional monitoring of the algae bloom will continue until there is confirmation that the bloom has

disappeared. The public should continue to follow this health advisory guidance until notified that the danger is over.

With proper precautions to avoid water contact, people are encouraged to enjoy recreational activities such as camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, catch-and-release fishing, and bird watching.

For local information contact your county health department. For additional health information, contact Ken Kauffman, DHS environmental health specialist, at (971) 673-0435 or Deanna Conners, DHS toxicologist at (971) 673-0444. Advisories are posted on the internet at <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/envtox/maadvisories.shtml>.

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