



DHS Media Contact: Patrick O'Neill (971) 673-1282
DHS Technical Contact: Ken Kauffman (971) 673-0435
Local Contact: Dunes City at (541) 997-3338

October 28, 2008

Public health advisory issued for Siltcoos Lake

A health advisory prompted by high algae levels found in Siltcoos Lake was issued today by Dunes City, the Lane County Health Department, and the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS).

“Water monitoring by lake scientists has confirmed the presence of blue-green algae that can produce toxins harmful to humans and animals,” said Deanna Conners, Public Health Toxicologist with the Oregon DHS.

These levels are likely to be associated with dangerous toxin concentrations in the water, according to World Health Organization guidelines.

Skin contact with raw water should be avoided as well as swallowing or inhaling water droplets. Drinking water from Siltcoos Lake may be dangerous because algae toxins cannot be removed easily by boiling, filtering or treating water.

Households around the lake should avoid the use of lake water except for toilet flushing.

DHS recommends that if people choose to eat fish from the lake, they should remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking since toxins are more likely to collect in these tissues.

Symptoms of numbness, tingling and dizziness can lead to difficulty breathing or heart problems and require immediate medical attention. Persons with symptoms of skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting should also receive medical attention if symptoms persist or worsen. Children and pets are particularly susceptible.

The public will be advised when the concern no longer exists.

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

For local information contact Dunes City at (541) 997-3338 or the South Coast Water District at (541) 997-8011. For health information contact an Environmental Health

Specialist at DHS (971) 673-0400 or the Lane County Health Department at (541) 682-4480. For more information on harmful algae blooms please visit <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/envtox/maadvisories.shtml>

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