



Technical Contact: Ken Kauffman, DHS (971) 673-0435
Al Johnson, Willamette NF (541) 225-6431
Media Contact: Bonnie Widerburg, DHS (971) 673-1282
Judith McHugh, Willamette NF (541) 225-6305

May 15, 2008

Public health advisory issued for –Hills Creek Reservoir

A health advisory prompted by high algae levels found in Hills Creek Reservoir, located 4 miles from Oakridge, was issued today by the Willamette National Forest, the Lane County Health Department, and the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS).

Water sampling by the Forest Service has confirmed the presence of blue-green algae that can produce toxins harmful to humans and animals, said Ken Kauffman, Environmental Health Specialist with the Oregon DHS Environmental Toxicology Program.

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

Swallowing or inhaling water droplets should be avoided, as well as skin contact with water by humans or animals. Drinking water from Hills Creek Reservoir is especially dangerous. The toxins cannot be removed by boiling, filtering, or treating water.

DHS recommends that if people choose to eat these fish, 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. Symptoms of skin irritation, weakness, diarrhea, nausea, cramps and fainting, and should also receive medical attention if they 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 Hills Creek Reservoir and enjoy activities such as camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, catch-and-release fishing and bird watching.

For local information contact the Willamette National Forest (541-782-2283) or www.fs.fed.us/r6/willamette/.

For health information, contact Ken Kauffman, DHS Environmental Health Specialist, at (971) 673-0435 or <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/envtox/maadvisories.shtml>.

###