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Public health advisory issued for Wickiup Reservoir

A health advisory prompted by high algae levels found in Wickiup Reservoir was issued today by the Deschutes National Forest, the Deschutes County Health Department, and the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS).

“Water sampling by the Deschutes National Forest 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 Wickiup Reservoir may be dangerous. The toxins cannot be removed by individuals such as campers, who boil, filter or treat water on their own.

DHS recommends that people who choose to eat fish from the lake 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 Wickiup Reservoir and enjoy activities such as camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, catch-and-release fishing and bird watching.

For local information contact the Deschutes National Forest at (541) 383-5300, www.fs.fed.us/r6/central_oregon.

For health information, contact Ken Kauffman, DHS Environmental Health Specialist, at (971) 673-0435 or <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/envtox/maadvisories.shtml> or contact Dan Peddycord at Deschutes County Health Department at (541) 322-7246.

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