



DHS Technical Contact: Ken Kauffman (971) 673-0435
DHS Media Contact: Patrick O'Neill (971) 673-1282
US Army Corps of Engineers: Jennifer Sowell
(503) 808-4510

September 10, 2008

Public health advisory issued for Willow Creek Reservoir

A health advisory prompted by high algae levels found in Willow Creek Reservoir, located near Heppner, Oregon was issued today by the US Army Corps of Engineers, Morrow County health officials, and the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS). A similar advisory in effect from July 2, 2008 was lifted on August 20, 2008. A new bloom or re-emergence of the earlier bloom has occurred.

Water sampling by the US Army Corps of Engineers 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 Willow Creek Reservoir is especially dangerous. The toxins cannot be removed by boiling, filtering, or treating water.

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 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 Willow Creek Reservoir and enjoy activities such as camping, hiking, biking, picnicking, catch-and-release fishing and bird watching.

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

For information contact Morrow County Health Department at (541) 676-5421

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

###