

Health Advisory issued for Fernan Lake

Panhandle Health District

A health advisory was issued today for Fernan Lake by the Panhandle Health District and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. Water samples confirmed the presence of the blue-green algae species of *Microcystis*, *Anabaena*, and *Aphanizomenon* - all species can produce potentially dangerous toxins. Precaution is advised.

These algae species may produce potentially dangerous toxins. *Children and pets are particularly susceptible*. In animals, a toxin that may be produced by *Anabaena* and *Aphanizomenon* can cause a rapid progression of neurological symptoms such as muscle spasm, decreased movement, labored breathing, convulsions and death. Symptoms have not been documented in people. However, the public is advised to avoid any activity that could lead to ingesting the lake water considering the effect these algal species have on animals.

This bloom requires added precaution because it is applicable to open water in the lake where water is an uncharacteristic green color and where unsightly thick green mats are present along shorelines. Drinking water from the lake may be dangerous if toxins are present; the toxins cannot be removed by boiling or filtering the water.

If people choose to eat fish from this area, it is recommended that you remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking since toxins are more likely to collect in those tissues.

Blue-green algae are naturally occurring, microscopic bacteria. Many species occur in Idaho surface waters and only some species release toxins under certain conditions. Harmful algal blooms occur in water conditions of optimal temperature, oxygen, and when nitrogen is unavailable and phosphorus is abundant. These circumstances are most common during the warmer months of late summer.

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

Often excess nutrients associated with algae blooms are caused by pollution from human activities. Water quality improvements can be expected to reduce future algae blooms so the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality is working with residents and landowners to implement nutrient reduction projects.