



Panhandle Health District

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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Advisory Issued for Fernan Lake



KOOTENAI CO., ID -- A health advisory was issued today for Fernan Lake by the Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Water samples confirmed the presence of the blue-green algae species of *Microcystis*, *Anabaena*, and *Gloetrichia* - species that can produce potentially dangerous toxins.

People recreating near Fernan Lake are advised to avoid swallowing or inhaling water and to avoid direct contact with water containing visible algae. Drinking water from the lake is especially dangerous and the toxins cannot be removed by boiling or filtering the water. Children and pets are particularly susceptible. 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. The physical appearance of blue-green algae blooms can be unsightly, often causing thick green mats along shorelines. Many species occur in Idaho surface waters and only some species release toxins under certain conditions. Harmful algae blooms occur in water conditions of optimal temperature, oxygen, and when nitrogen is unavailable and phosphorus is abundant. Often excess nutrients associated with algae blooms are caused by pollution from human activities. These circumstances are most common during the warmer months of late summer.

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