

Media Advisory – Sept. 25, 2009

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Algae at Lake Cassidy reaches toxic levels

Snohomish County Surface Water Management (SWM) recently found high levels of a potentially toxic blue-green algae at Lake Cassidy, prompting warning signs at boat launches and public areas.

The bloom of algae has been occurring at the lake north of Lake Stevens since mid-August, but weekly testing did not show unsafe levels of the toxin microcystin, which can sicken people and animals, until early September. The most recent test results showed 665 parts per billion of microcystin, which is more than one hundred times the state recreational guideline of 6 parts per billion.

SWM, in coordination with the Snohomish Health District, has posted warning signs at the public access areas of the lake, which include the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife boat launch and the Snohomish County Lake Cassidy Wetlands Park & Interpretive Center on the Centennial Trail. The signs warn people not to swim in the lake or drink lake water until the algal bloom dissipates, to keep pets away from the water, to clean fish well, and to avoid areas with algae when boating.

The Lake Cassidy bloom appears green, as if paint were lying on the surface of the water. Blue-green algal blooms thrive in warm weather and nutrient-rich water and may last for several weeks to months.

Human health effects can include stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhea, skin rashes and liver damage. Pets and wildlife have died following exposure to toxic blue-green algae in some Washington lakes.

SWM will continue monitoring the lake weekly to track the progress of the bloom. Warning signs will be removed when lab results and further testing show toxin levels are no longer a threat.

Find more information about toxic algal blooms at Lake Cassidy at www.lakes.surfacewater.info or contact Gene Williams at 425-388-3464, ext. 4563.

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