



State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER J. COX
Lieutenant Governor

Department of
Environmental Quality

Alan Matheson
Executive Director

Brad T Johnson
Deputy Director

L. Scott Baird
Deputy Director

NEWS RELEASE

July 12, 2017

CONTACT

Donna Kemp Spangler
Communications Director
Office: 801-536-4484
Cell: 801-554-4944
dspangler@utah.gov

Algal Bloom Spread throughout Utah Lake

SALT LAKE CITY – Blue-green algae recently discovered in Utah Lake’s Provo Bay has now spread to the majority of the lake, prompting the Utah County Health Department (UCHD) to expand its warnings that caution people to avoid immersion in the water due to the presence of algal species that can cause irritation and have the potential to produce toxins.

Warning signs caution people, their pets and other animals to stay out of the lake because contact can cause headaches, gastrointestinal distress and skin irritation even without the presence of toxins. Signs will be posted at popular access sites around the lake.

Based on test results reported on July 12, the level of cyanotoxins in Utah Lake is not considered a health threat to livestock at this time. The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) will continue to monitor data and provide direction to the agriculture community as the cyanotoxin concentrations change.

The UDAF advises livestock owners to locate an alternative source of water should cyanotoxins rise to unhealthy levels in the future.

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) Division of Water Quality analyzed the tests results collected July 6 and July 11. The July 6 results show the cell count concentrations spreading and increasing in density in the southern and western portions of the lake. Toxins were non-detect on the July 6 samples. Tests on July 11 samples confirm the toxins microcystin and anatoxin-a are present. This is an indication of more serious health concerns, but not yet at the level warranting closure.

DEQ and Utah Department of Health developed public health advisories that align with national and international guidelines based on cyanobacterial cell density and toxin concentrations. Two weeks ago UCHD and Utah State Parks first posted warning signs at Provo Harbor, the closest access point to Provo Bay after water tests detected the presence of algal species that have the potential to produce toxins.

Although blue-green algae are a natural part of many freshwater ecosystems, under the right conditions they can expand rapidly. High levels of nutrients in the water, combined with warm temperatures, abundant sunlight, and calm water, can promote growth, resulting in extensive

-MORE-

blooms. These blooms consist of cyanobacteria (often referred to as blue-green algae), a type of bacteria that poses risks to humans, wildlife, domestic animals, and fish. Symptoms of exposure include headache, fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, and sometimes allergic-like reactions from skin contact. The symptoms of exposure to toxins are much more severe.

For concerns about possible human exposure, call the Utah Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222 or your physician.

DEQ will continue to provide updated information at: habs.utah.gov.

To sign up for updates: go to alerts.utahcounty.gov, create account. Select contact methods. Create profile, select location. Choose alert subscription “Utah Lake” under “Utah County Alerts.”

###

About DEQ

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah’s air, land and water through balanced regulation. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah’s air, land and water. For more information, visit www.deq.utah.gov, follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)), or call 1-800-458-0145.



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH