



State of Utah

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NEWS RELEASE

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Agencies begin monitoring popular waters for E. coli

Salt Lake City, Utah – State health and environmental officials have once again teamed up with other local and federal agencies to routinely monitor popular recreational destinations to determine bacteria levels in lakes and reservoirs commonly used for recreation.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, scientists and trained technicians will sample beaches and reservoirs monthly. Information about unsafe conditions will be posted because people who come in contact with contaminated water can develop gastrointestinal illness.

It's all part of a cooperative effort by the E. Coli Workgroup, formed in 2009, to assess the level of E. coli in popular recreational waterways. E. coli is a useful and reliable indicator of pathogen contamination from human and animal waste.

“We created an E. coli Workgroup to expand cooperative monitoring of recreational waters throughout the state to step up efforts to caution people who may be at increased risk of illness from contact with this water,” said Walt Baker, Utah Division of Water Quality director.

Last year, high levels of E. coli were found at Salem Pond in Utah County, prompting local officials to post signs advising visitors of increased risk from E. coli contamination. The advisory is not a beach closing, but it is advisable to avoid coming into contact with contaminated water. If you have come into contact with contaminated water, you should wash with soap and water afterwards. Fishing at Salem Pond or other areas tested is not affected by this advisory. E. coli stays in the intestines of fish. It does not affect the fish or the filet. As long as you cook the fish properly, the fish you catch are safe to eat. Also, remember to wash your hands with hot, soapy water after handling any wild game. Test results for Salem Pond and other sampled sites are available at: www.ecoli.utah.gov.

The E. coli Workgroup is comprised of stakeholders from a broad base of agencies with land management, health, environment, and recreation duties. Those include representatives from DEQ, Health, Parks, Agriculture, municipalities, Bureau of Reclamation, Tribes, USU Extension, and recreational groups.

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