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Jordan River and Related Canals Test Results Show Low Levels of Toxins

Irrigation warning lifted; Utah Lake remains closed

SALT LAKE CITY – Samples collected from Utah Lake, Jordan River, and canals on July 20, 2016 show that the concentrations of cyanobacteria are decreasing from the levels measured the previous week.

In the recent samples from Utah Lake, only samples collected from the Lincoln Harbor and American Fork harbor were greater than 100,000 cells per milliliter of water, the level at which a warning for recreational activities is recommended. Utah County Health Department is maintaining the closure of Utah Lake until the decrease is confirmed with sampling planned for Tuesday July 26, 2016. UCHD, however has reopened the Utah County portion of the Jordan River, but maintains warning signs as well as Salt Lake County Health Department.

Preliminary lab results for samples collected by the Department of Environmental Quality from Utah Lake and the Jordan River show low to non-detect levels of all measurable toxins (liver and nerve toxins). The exception was the one high concentration of liver toxin measured from a scum sample at Lincoln Harbor from July 15, 2016.

"This is encouraging news for Utah Lake and Jordan River. We hope the trend continues in the coming weeks," said Erica Gaddis, assistant director of DWQ. "Preliminary discussions with the lab in Florida indicate non-detect levels of toxin which we will confirm once analyses have been completed tomorrow."

The latest result has prompted the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) to lift its advisory against using water from Utah Lake for food production and livestock watering. The UDAF maintains there is no reason to believe that fruits and vegetables irrigated with Utah Lake water are unsafe to consume. But UDAF will continue to monitor the situation closely.

"We are cautiously optimistic that continued water test results will bring good news for our growers and consumers," said Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, LuAnn Adams. "We are grateful to DEQ for providing sound science-based data to help clarify this issue," she added.

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In addition, the UDAF is sampling and testing fruits and vegetables irrigated with Utah Lake water. Those results will be made available to the public on the UDAF's website (ag.utah.gov) and via social media channels.

Based on the lower level of cyanotoxins indicated in the report, livestock owners may return to normal watering practices for Jordan River water and Irrigation canals in Salt Lake County, but not for water coming directly from Utah Lake.
Riverton City has reopened its canal for irrigation.

These warnings have not affected drinking water, since it comes from a separate source.

DWQ encourages the public to remain watchful and report any changes in water color that may indicate presence of blue-green algae. Elevated levels of nutrients, combined with warm temperature, abundant sunlight and calm water can promote rapid algal growth.

For updates, visit: http://deq.utah.gov/locations/U/utahlake/algal-bloom.htm

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About DEQ
Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard public health and quality of life by protecting and enhancing the environment. 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) and Twitter (UtahDEQ), or call 1-800-458-0145.