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***DEQ, DNR Ask Water Recreators to Be Aware of
Harmful Algal Blooms, Waterborne Pathogens This Summer***

As warm weather returns to Utah, residents are advised to take steps to protect their health while on the water

SALT LAKE CITY — Cyanobacteria blooms, or harmful algal blooms, and waterborne pathogens are a threat to water recreation in Utah. These blooms pose health risks and can put a damper on summer fun. This year, Utah's Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Division of Water Quality (DWQ) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) want to remind recreators to take steps to protect themselves while recreating.

“There are a number of factors that contribute to the development of harmful algal blooms. These include weather patterns, temperature and nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) in the water,” said Division of Water Quality Director Erica Gaddis. “Before boating, swimming or fishing, be sure to check water conditions.”

Harmful algal blooms occur when stagnant, nutrient-rich water warms up in the summer and becomes the ideal breeding ground for cyanobacteria — commonly known as blue-green algae. Under these circumstances, the bacteria can reproduce quickly, overwhelm the waterbody and in some cases produce skin, liver and nervous system toxins.

Waterborne pathogens are bacteria, viruses and parasites that can occasionally be found in Utah waters. These waterborne pathogens can cause diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, fever and rashes. People can be exposed to these pathogens if they swallow water when they swim or eat food without washing their hands first.

The Division of Water Quality samples waterbodies for waterborne pathogens throughout the recreation season (May to October) to keep the public, local health departments and other stakeholders informed of current conditions. DWQ posts updates on sampling results and health advisories as soon as the information becomes available at ecoli.utah.gov.

Due to state budget uncertainty, DWQ cannot monitor, sample or provide updates for harmful algal blooms on Utah waterbodies until at least July 1, 2020.

Because cyanobacteria blooms can appear quickly — sometimes in hours — and shift locations based on weather conditions, water recreators are asked to avoid:

- Water that resembles spilled paint, antifreeze or grass clippings
- Surface scum or film
- Discolored or streaking water
- Green globs on or below the surface of the water

Utah's waters offer unparalleled recreational opportunities and are generally safe. Water recreators, however, can take a few simple steps to protect themselves, their families and their pets while enjoying Utah's waters:

- Don't swallow water when swimming
- Avoid areas of scum when boating
- Wash hands with clean water before eating or preparing food
- When fishing, clean fish well and discard the guts
- Don't let pets drink from scummy water

For concerns about possible human exposure, call your physician or the Utah Poison Control at 800-222-1222. For concerns about possible animal exposure, contact a local veterinarian. For concerns about possible livestock exposure, contact the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food at 801-538- 7100.

To learn more about harmful algal blooms visit habs.utah.gov.

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 deq.utah.gov, follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)).