South Central Public Health District
1020 Washington Street North
Twin Falls, ID 83301
208-737-5900
www.phd5.idaho.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 23rd, 2016

Laboratory Results of Algae Specimens from Mormon Reservoir Indicate a High Level of Microcystins

CAMAS COUNTY – A health advisory was issued for Mormon Reservoir by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) on August 12th after the presence of harmful algal blooms (HABs) was confirmed. Mormon Reservoir is primarily used for recreational activities and as a water supply for grazing cattle.

HAB specimens collected and sent to a laboratory for analysis on August 8th have been returned. Laboratory results indicate a very high level of the toxin Microcystin. Samples indicated an average of 835µg/L or 835 micrograms of Microcystins per liter of water.

The World Health Organization indicates that 20 to 2,000 micrograms per liter of water as a "High risk" for recreational water users.

Based on laboratory results, the public is strongly advised to take the following precautions:

- Avoid exposure to water experiencing a HAB. Take extra precautions to ensure children, pets, and livestock are not exposed to the water.
- Do not consume water with a blue-green algae bloom. Neither boiling nor disinfecting removes blue-green algae toxins from water.
- If fish are known to have been exposed to a blue-green algae bloom, only consume the fillet portion (remove the fat, organs, and skin). Wash hands after handling. The risk associated with consuming fish caught in waters with a blue-green algae bloom is unknown. Toxins produced by blue-green algae can accumulate in the organs of fish.

DEQ will continue to monitor water quality until the bloom dissipates and will advise the public when the concern no longer exists.

Microcystin is produced by Cyanobacteria (often called blue-green algae). Microcystin is hepatotoxic, meaning they are able to cause serious damage to the liver. Lesser symptoms include stomach ache, diarrhea, and vomiting. Microcystin can kill animals that drink contaminated water. Dogs, cattle, birds, and fish are more likely to be affected because they are more likely to drink from or swim in affected waters.

HABs and associated toxins can cause serious illness and possibly death in humans and animals. According to the CDC:

- In 2007, 15 people were affected with respiratory illness from exposure to HAB toxins associated with a HAB outbreak near the Florida coast.
- From 2007 to 2001, HAB-associated foodborne exposures caused 273 cases of human illness. These illnesses included stomach, intestinal, and neurological symptoms from eating finfish or shellfish.
- From 2009 to 2010, 11 HAB-associated outbreaks from recreation exposures in freshwater settings in three states were reported to the CDC. The 61 people sickened in the outbreaks experienced skin irritation, stomach, intestinal, respiratory, or neurological signs and symptoms. These 11 outbreaks represented 46% of the 24 outbreaks associated with untreated recreational water reported for 2009-2010.
- In 2014, nearly 50,000 residents of Toledo, Ohio could not use public water to drink, cook, or bather for almost three days because it was contaminated with a toxin from a HAB in Lake Erie.

More Information:

- Visit the DEQ website http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/blue-green-algae/
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Blue-green Algae Brochure http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Health/EnvironmentalHealth/Blue%20green%20algae%20brochure.pdf
- For updates, please visit phd5.idaho.gov or call the Public Health Hotline 866-450-3594

Contacts:

- Balthasar Buhidar PhD, Water Quality Manager, Idaho Department of Environmental Health 208-736-2190
- Josh Jensen, Public Health Program Manager, South Central Public Health District 208-737-5915
- Jeff Pierson, Community Relations Director, South Central Public Health District 208-737-5945

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