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Media Release

News Release

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
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Blue-Green Algae a Health Hazard in Klamath River; Caution Urged in Water Contact and Fish Consumption

Sacramento – Due to its potential health risks, federal, state, county and tribal agencies are urging swimmers, boaters and recreational users to avoid direct contact with or use of waters containing blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), now blooming in reaches of the Klamath River in Northern California.

Reaches of the Klamath River including the Copco and Iron Gate Reservoirs, and below to the confluence with Tully Creek are now posted with health advisories warning against human and animal contact with the water. People can still enjoy camping, hiking, biking, canoeing, picnicking, or other recreational activities while visiting the reservoirs and the Klamath River, with proper precautions to avoid direct contact with algal bloom waters.

Recent monitoring found cyanobacteria (*Microcystis aeruginosa*) cell counts that exceeded public health advisory thresholds in Klamath River waters at locations in Copco and Iron Gate Reservoirs and downstream through Weitchpec on the Yurok Reservation.

Iron Gate and Copco Reservoirs were posted with health advisories in June and these advisories remain in effect. Residents and recreational water users of the Klamath River from Copco Reservoir to Tully Creek are urged to use caution and avoid getting in the water near these bloom areas.

“These conditions are concerning as blue-green algae can pose health risks, particularly to children and pets. These conditions underscore the importance of implementing the Klamath Basin water quality restoration strategy,” said Matt St. John, executive officer of the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

“We urge people to choose safe activities when visiting the affected reaches of the Klamath River and recommend that people and their pets avoid contact with water in locations with



blooms, and particularly avoid swallowing or inhaling water spray in an algal bloom area." St. John said.

The algal blooms appear as bright green in the water, and blue-green, white or brown foam, scum or mats can float on the water and accumulate along the shore. Recreational exposure to toxic blue-green algae can cause eye irritation, allergic skin rash, mouth ulcers, vomiting, diarrhea, and cold and flu-like symptoms. Liver failure, nerve damage and death have occurred in rare situations where large amounts of contaminated water were directly ingested.

The [Statewide Guidance on Harmful Algal Blooms](#) recommends the following for blue-green algae impacted waters:

- Take care that pets and livestock do not drink the water, swim through heavy algae, scums or mats, or lick their fur after going in the water. Rinse pets in clean drinking water to remove algae from fur.
- Avoid wading, swimming or jet or water skiing in water containing algae blooms or scums or mats.
- Do not drink, cook or wash dishes with untreated surface water from these areas under any circumstances; common water purification techniques (e.g., camping filters, tablets and boiling) do not remove toxins.
- People should not eat mussels or other bivalves collected from these areas. Limit or avoid eating fish; if fish are consumed, remove guts and liver, and rinse filets in clean drinking water.
- Get medical treatment immediately if you think that you, your pet, or livestock might have been poisoned by blue-green algae toxins. Be sure to alert the medical professional to the possible contact with blue-green algae.

Water users are encouraged to check most recent sampling results on the Klamath Blue-Green Algae Tracker (see link below). Even when blue-green algae blooms are not present, still carefully watch young children and warn them not to swallow the water.

For more information, please visit:

California Department of Public Health:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/vironhealth/water/Pages/Bluegreenalgae.aspx>

State Water Resources Control Board

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/bluegreen_algae/

CA Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment:

<http://oehha.ca.gov/ecotox/microcystins.html>

Klamath Blue-Green Algae Tracker

<http://www.kbmp.net/blue-green-algae-tracker>

US Environmental Protection Agency



<http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/standards/criteria/nutrients/cyanoabs.cfm>

Siskiyou County Public Health Department:

<http://www.co.siskiyou.ca.us/PHS/phs.aspx>

(530) 841-2100

Water quality monitoring for the Klamath River is conducted collaboratively by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, PacifiCorp, the Karuk Tribe, the Yurok Tribe, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and United States Environmental Protection Agency from Link River Dam in Oregon to the estuary in California. The health advisory postings are supported by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the California Department of Public Health, as well as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Yurok and Karuk Tribes.

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