



COUNTY OF LAKE
Marketing & Economic Development
255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453-5406
707-263-2580 FAX 707-263-1012

www.lakecounty.com

CONTACTS: Scott DeLeon, (707) 263-2244
Jennifer Hammond or Debra Sommerfield, (707) 263-2580

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COUNTY OFFICIALS WORK TO HELP MINIMIZE
CLEAR LAKE'S SEASONAL ALGAE BLOOM

LAKE COUNTY, CA — Lake County officials moved into action last week at the early signs of a seasonal algae bloom, which emerged in recent days on Clear Lake, in limited areas such as Redbud, Austin, and Highlands parks in the City of Clearlake and Island Park in Clearlake Oaks; the vast majority of the lake is not impacted.

At early reports of sightings, Water Resources staff began implementing the Department's multi-pronged approach designed to help minimize the impact of the algae, working with specialized contractors to treat the blue-green algae. The algae mitigation efforts are part of the County's focused approach that is funded by a \$1.4 million dollar appropriation by the County's Board of Supervisors to protect Clear Lake's ecosystem and to enable residents and visitors to enjoy the lake to the fullest extent possible this summer.

Scott DeLeon, director of the County's Water Resources Department, said the appropriation provides the funding necessary to work to mitigate nuisance algae and weeds. DeLeon said in addition to the chemical treatment, the Department's algae-mitigation efforts also include assisting citizens and resort owners with the installation of pumps to provide aeration and circulation by spraying water onto the surface of algae mats that can help to knock down the algae around private docks and beaches.

DeLeon also is investigating the potential of a mechanical harvesting technique that would essentially vacuum the algae mats and, through the use of a centrifuge, de-water the material, perhaps making it possible to dispose of only the algae material.

Several species of blue-green "algae" (also known as cyanobacteria) are present in Clear Lake, but the predominant species in this year's bloom is Lyngbya. The ultraviolet rays of sunlight kill the blue-green algae cells, which then produce an extremely foul odor and create floating mats that turn turquoise, purple, orange, and yellow.

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RELEASE: County Officials Work to Minimize Summer Algae Bloom

RELEASE DATE: July 11, 2011

Page 2 of 2

As in past years, Lake County Health Officer Dr. Karen Tait and officials from the County's Environmental Health Division together recommended that people and pets stay out of areas of the water where visible algae mats or scum are present and re-emphasized that untreated lake water should never be used for drinking. Health Department officials have posted advisory signs at the impacted public beaches and continue to respond to calls and e-mails from concerned members of the public.

Dr. Tait explained, "Last year, despite heavy blooms in some locations, measured toxin levels had been within safe recreational water levels. I am hopeful this will be the case again this year." She indicated the mix of algae types and extent of production can fluctuate and tests are not available for all possible toxin types. Based on research being done on the lake water, only minimal and mostly no measurable toxins have been detected.

With more than 68 square miles of surface area and 100 miles of shoreline, Clear Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake within the boundaries of California, and at an estimated two million years old, it also is one of the oldest lakes in North America. Its large drainage basin, shallow depth, and warm summertime water temperatures contribute to its rich nutrient content that supports the growth of algae and aquatic plants, which in turn, supports large populations of fish and wildlife. This vast expanse of warm water and numerous channels and natural bays also make Clear Lake attractive for visitors who enjoy all sorts of recreational activities including fishing, sailing, waterskiing, and kayaking.

For more information about the algae bloom and efforts to mitigate its impacts, contact the Lake County Department of Water Resources at (707) 263-2344. For health-related questions, contact the Lake County Health Services office at (707) 263-1164.

The Lake County Marketing and Economic Development Program is a division of the Lake County Administrative Office and actively works to promote tourism to and commerce in Lake County; efforts include media relations, visitor attraction, film commission, community beautification, and business assistance. For information, call (707) 263-2580 or visit www.lakecounty.com.

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