

North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

19 January 2012

Blue-green algae red alert issued for Baywood Chase lake

The North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee today issued a red (high alert) for blue-green algae in the stormwater pond at Baywood Chase residential estate in Suffolk Park.

Red level warning indicates that waters are unsuitable for recreational use or primary contact by water users and may also pose a threat to pets.

Committee spokesperson Mr Brian Dodd, said that people should avoid all contact with water under a red alert.

"The North Coast Regional Algal Co-ordinating Committee, in conjunction with Byron Shire Council, advise all people who use the lake at Baywood Chase for recreation to be aware of the situation," said Mr Dodd.

"Sampling by Council has detected high levels of blue-green algae in the lake and accordingly, wish to advise the community in Suffolk Park to avoid contact with the affected water."

Warning signs have been positioned around the lake and will remain in place until the bloom subsides.

"Residents and visitors should avoid all contact with the algal bloom and ensure animals such as dogs are kept away from the bloom especially where surface scum is visible or where blue-green algae are suspected."

Blue-green algae can cause skin rashes, asthma and eye and ear irritations if contacted and diarrhoea and other health problems if ingested. Animals can become very sick as a result of drinking water affected by blue-green algae and there have been cases of animal deaths.

Dogs are particularly susceptible as they ingest algae by licking their coats.

People are advised not to enter the water, and are further advised not to drink untreated water or bathe in water drawn from the lake whilst a red level warning is in place. Boiling the water does not inactivate algal toxins.

There is some evidence that small quantities of algal toxins may enter fish flesh when a bloom produces toxins. Any fish caught in water affected by a bloom should be cleaned and washed thoroughly in uncontaminated water and any internal organs disposed of before consumption.

People should not eat mussels, crayfish or the internal organs of fish from red alert areas.

"Byron Shire Council will continue monitoring this blue-green algal bloom and the community will be advised when conditions change," Mr Dodd said.

For more information on algal alerts currently in place, please call the State's toll free algal information line on 1800 999 457 or visit the NSW Office of Water's website –

www.water.nsw.gov.au