

North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

26 February 2014

Marine algal bloom precautionary warning: Tweed Heads and Kingscliff areas

The North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee today issued a precautionary warning for marine algal blooms within the Tweed Shire area.

David Basso, Chair of the North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (RACC) said that sampling undertaken by Tweed Shire Council yesterday confirmed the algae as *Trichodesmium*, which can cause skin irritation.

“The blooms can appear as a ‘red, green or pink discolouration’ throughout the water column and have been reported from the canal behind Shearwater Parade Tweed Heads, Jack Evans Boat Harbour (northern end near Twin Towns Services Club) and Cudgen Creek. In all cases the wind is keeping the material close to the sandy shores though this may change,” Mr Basso said.

“Tweed Shire Council have also had a report of a paint like substance in the canal behind Kennedy Drive which is also suspected of being a blue-green algae species.”

“Council staff are conducting visual inspections this morning to see if the blooms in the area had dissipated overnight; however, people are reminded that blooms can occur quickly and not to enter water bodies where visual scums are present.”

“The bloom looks like an oil slick on the surface of the water, in some parts there is foam, and also appears oily or greasy in large patches.”

As a precautionary measure NSW Health recommends, due to the obviously high concentrations of algae cells and the potential toxicity of the bloom, that people should avoid contact with the affected water.

Contact with marine blue-green algae affected water can cause skin rashes, asthma and eye and ear irritations.

Mr Basso added that if any health effects are experienced from contact with water affected by algal blooms, medical advice should be promptly sought.

The NSW Department of Primary Industry (DPI) recommends that people should not eat recreationally-collected shellfish, eg pippis, mussels or oysters in affected waters. There is some evidence that small quantities of algal toxins may enter seafood flesh when a bloom produces toxins. The DPI also recommends that finfish caught in the area are well cleaned, washed in uncontaminated water and any internal organs disposed of before consumption. Seafood must be properly cooked.

In time, the bloom will disperse naturally with the winds, currents and tide.

An update on the situation will be provided as soon as new information becomes available.