

North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

25 September 2013

Blue-green algae 'red alert' - Baywood Chase Lake at Suffolk Park

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

A 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 Chair, Mr David Basso, 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," Mr Basso said.

"Sampling by Council has continued to detect high levels of blue-green algae in the lake and accordingly, we 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, especially where surface scum is visible or where blue-green algae are suspected."

"Residents should also ensure animals such as dogs are kept away from the bloom."

Blue-green algae can cause skin rashes, asthma and eye and ear irritations if contacted and diarrhoea and other health problems if ingested. If contact with eyes or skin occurs the area should be washed with clean water as soon as possible. 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 also 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 remove or 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 bloom and the community will be advised when conditions change," Mr Basso said.

Byron Shire Councils' Environmental Services can also discuss local conditions by telephoning (02) 6626 7054 during normal office hours.

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