

Metropolitan and South Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

13 April 2012

BLUE-GREEN ALGAL ALERT FOR NEPEAN RIVER AT PENRITH WEIR

The Metropolitan and South Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee today issued a high level blue-green algal alert for the Nepean River – Penrith Weir to Warragamba River.

Visual inspections conducted today have found blue-green algae present in the high range with extensive scums and are a potential health risk to people and pets.

People should not undertake recreational activities where they may be coming into direct contact with the water such as swimming or water skiing, as well as domestic uses including showering and washing. Anyone coming into contact with blue-green algae contaminated water should wash in 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 ingest algae by licking their coats.

Blue-green algae is usually very obvious, appearing as green paint-like scums on the water and foreshore edges or clumps throughout the water and usually has a strong odour. This makes the water appear dirty, green or discoloured.

Warning signs are being erected in the affected areas.

Blue-green algae may cause severe stomach upsets, nausea and skin irritation in people.

Blue-green algae may contain toxins - boiling the water does not remove the toxins produced by the algae.

People should also avoid eating freshwater shellfish and the head and entrails of fish caught in the affected areas, as toxins can accumulate in these organisms.

People who believe they may have been affected by the algae are advised to seek medical treatment.

The bloom was detected during monitoring undertaken by the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean. Further monitoring will be conducted to assess the extent of the bloom and the public will be advised as the situation changes.

Information updates about blue-green algae blooms and red level warning areas can be obtained from the Regional Algal Coordinating Committee freecall Algal Information Hotline on **1800 999 457** or visit - www.water.nsw.gov.au

ENDS