

North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

21 February 2014

Blue-green algal red alert for Duchess Creek at Bonny Hills

Pools of water at Duchess Creek Beach Outlet at Bonny Hills, have returned sample results with high levels of blue-green algae and a red alert is currently in place.

Mr David Basso, Chair of the North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (RACC), said that there was a potential health risk to people and animals due to the harmful effects of blue-green algae.

"The blue-green algae that is present in the pools of water at Duchess Creek Beach Outlet has appeared as scums and is leaving algae trails on the sand as the water discharges from the creek into the sea," Mr Basso said.

"Sampling by Port Macquarie Hastings Council has found high levels of blue-green algae, so the community are advised not to enter the creek water or allow children to play in puddles or on the sand where algae is present."

"Domestic pets should also be kept away from the area, especially dogs which are particularly susceptible as they ingest algae by licking their coats."

"People who use the creek for recreation are also advised to avoid contact with the affected water while the red alert is in place as it could result in skin rashes, eye and ear irritations."

"Ingesting the water can lead to diarrhoea and other long term health problems. Asthma attacks can also be brought on by contact with blue-green algae."

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 any shellfish or the internal organs of fish from Duchess Creek.

Port Macquarie Hastings Council is monitoring the situation very closely with regular sampling and analysis of the affected water and asks that the public heed the warning signs erected by Council.

"Council will continue to monitor this bloom and the community will be advised when conditions change," said Mr Basso.

Information about blue-green algae blooms is available from the freecall Algal Information Hotline **1800 999 457** or visit the NSW Office of Water website - **www.water.nsw.gov.au/algal_alerts**.

The current status of the algal bloom is also available on Port Macquarie Councils web site – www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au