

Hunter Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

3 August 2012

BLUE-GREEN ALGAL ALERT FOR LOWER MYALL RIVER

The Hunter Regional Algal Coordinating Committee today issued a high level blue-green algal alert for the Lower Myall River.

Recent sampling has found that algae numbers are in the high range and are a potential health risk to people.

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.

Blue-green algae can be blown around the river with the prevailing wind conditions and people are advised to avoid areas where algae is obvious, as areas affected can change rapidly.

Blue green algae appears as green paint-like scum on the water and foreshore edges or clumps throughout the water and usually has a strong earthy 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.

Common sense would suggest not to consume fish caught in water affected by a bloom. 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 high level blue-green algae alert areas.

The Hunter New England Area Health Service advises people who believe they may have been affected by the algae to seek medical treatment.

Further sampling by the Hunter RACC will be undertaken to determine the extent of the bloom and advise the public 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 the NSW Office of Water website www.water.nsw.gov.au

ENDS
