

Metropolitan and South Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

21 March 2013

Red Alert for Blue-green algae in Lake Williams

The Metropolitan/South Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (RACC) today issued a red alert for blue green algae in Lake Williams situated near Nimmitabel.

Technical co-ordinator for the RACC, Lee Bowling, said the latest sampling indicates that the algae levels are currently very high, pushing the Lake into red alert.

"Accordingly the Regional Algal Coordinating Committee, in conjunction with Cooma-Monaro Shire Council, wish to advise people who use Lake Williams for recreation to be aware of the situation," Mr Bowling said.

Warning signs have been positioned around the Lake and will remain until the bloom subsides.

Algae may be visible on the water surface or at the edge as a green scum but people should be aware that should the surface of the Lake be disturbed by wind the algae may be difficult to see.

"It is important for people to know that contact with the effected water could result in skin rashes, eye and/or ear irritations. Ingesting the water can lead to diarrhoea and long term health problems. Asthma attacks can also be brought on by contact with blue-green algae."

"All pets should be kept out of the water as the potential harmful effects of blue-green algae can cause death in animals," Mr Bowling said.

"Dogs are particularly susceptible as they 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 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.

"Cooma Council is regularly monitoring the situation and asks that the public heed the warning signs put up by Council," Mr Bowling said.

The latest status of blue-green algae alerts can be obtained from the freecall Algal Information Hotline on **1800 999 457**.

Additional information regarding blue-green algae is available on the Office of Water website – www.water.nsw.gov.au