

North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee

20 February 2013

Marine algal bloom precautionary warning: North Haven area

The North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee today issued a precautionary warning for marine algal blooms in the North Haven area.

David Basso, Chair of the North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (RACC) said that sampling undertaken yesterday confirmed the algae as *Trichodesmium*, which can cause skin irritation.

“The blooms appear as a ‘red discolouration’ throughout the water column and have been reported from North Haven to Watson Taylor Lake and Laurieton, as well as isolated pockets scattered along the coast,” Mr Basso said.

“Visual inspections this morning would indicate that the bloom in the North Haven area has dissipated overnight; however, people are reminded that blooms can occur quickly and not to enter water bodies where visual scums are present.”

“The bloom looks like an oil slick on the surface of the water, and at the moment the bloom is green grey in colour, in some parts there is foam, and also appears oily or greasy in large patches.”

As a precautionary measure NSW Health recommends, due to the obviously high concentrations of algae cells and the potential toxicity of the bloom, that people should avoid contact with the affected water.

Contact with marine blue-green algae affected water can cause skin rashes, asthma and eye and ear irritations.

Mr Basso added that if any health effects are experienced from contact with water affected by algal blooms, medical advice should be promptly sought.

The NSW Department of Primary Industry (DPI) recommends that people should not eat recreationally-collected shellfish, pipis, mussels or oysters. There is some evidence that small quantities of algal toxins may enter fish flesh when a bloom produces toxins. The DPI also recommends that finfish caught in the area are well cleaned washed in uncontaminated water and any internal organs disposed of before consumption and properly cooked.

In time, the bloom will disperse naturally with the winds, currents and tide.

An update on the situation will be provided as soon as new information becomes available.