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NEWS

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Health Advisory Issued for Little Camas Reservoir

Elmore County, ID – Central District Health Department (CDHD) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), have issued a health advisory for Little Camas Reservoir in Elmore County, due to the presence of blue-green algae. The reservoir is located northeast of Mountain Home off of Highway 20. People are urged to avoid recreating in or near the water.

Recent samples taken from the reservoir indicate high levels of multiple toxin-producing organisms, otherwise known as blue-green algae that could make people and animals sick. Blue-green algae are naturally occurring, microscopic bacteria that can produce potentially dangerous toxins. People recreating near Little Camas Reservoir are advised to avoid swallowing or inhaling water and avoid direct contact with water containing visible algae. Drinking water from the reservoir is especially dangerous and the toxins cannot be removed by boiling or filtering the water. Children and pets are particularly susceptible to illness related to blue-green algae. If people choose to eat fish from the

reservoir, it is recommended that they remove all fat, skin and organs before cooking since toxins are more likely to collect in those tissues.

Blue-green algae blooms occur in water with high levels of nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, often during warmer weather months. The blooms are generally green or blue-green in color, and may form thick mats along shorelines. They may look like surface scum, resembling pea soup and can have an unpleasant odor.

Samples taken at the Little Camas Reservoir indicate bacteria counts that could make people and animals sick, so everyone should heed these precautions and avoid contact with the water:

- Humans and animals should stay out of the reservoir water. Swimming, wading, or other activities with full body contact with the reservoir water should be avoided.
- Humans, pets and livestock should not drink the reservoir water.
- If reservoir water contacts skin or pet fur, wash with clean potable water as soon as possible.
- Areas of visible algae accumulation should be avoided.
- Do not allow pets to eat dried algae.
- Fish should be cleaned and rinsed with clean water. Only the fillet portion should be consumed. All other parts should be thrown out.

People exposed to water with high concentrations of blue-green algae may experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, skin irritation, allergic responses, liver damage, or neurotoxic reaction such as tingling fingers and toes. Anyone with symptoms should seek medical attention.

For more information on harmful algal blooms and a statewide map of water quality health advisories in place, visit <http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/recreation-health-advisories/blue-green-algae/>

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