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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and South Central Public Health District issue a health advisory for Mormon Reservoir

CAMAS COUNTY- A health advisory was issued today for Mormon Reservoir by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and South Central Public Health District (SCPHD). The DEQ responded to a report of a Cyanobacteria bloom on June 14th and subsequent taxonomical analysis has confirmed the presence of a species known to produce toxins. The analysis also estimated a cell count exceeding 1 Million cells/mL. An additional visual inspection on June 21, confirmed that the algae are continuing to proliferate. Toxicology results are expected soon. Cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, are ubiquitous in our environment but a few species are known to produce toxins that pose a threat to humans and other animals, particularly canines.

Based on the taxonomic analysis and visual inspection of Mormon Reservoir, DEQ feels a posting is necessary to caution the public of the danger this Harmful Algae Bloom (HAB) poses.

The public is advised to take the following precautions:

- Avoid exposure to water experiencing a harmful algal bloom. Take extra precautions to ensure children, pets, and livestock are not exposed to the water.
- Pets that are inadvertently exposed should be washed immediately and thoroughly with fresh water taking care not to allow them to clean themselves after exiting the affected water.
- Do not consume water with a blue-green algae bloom. Neither boiling nor disinfecting removes blue-green algae toxins from water.
- If fish are known to have been exposed to a blue-green algae bloom, only consume the fillet portion (remove the fat, organs, and skin). Wash hands after handling. The risk associated with consuming fish caught in waters with a blue-green algae bloom is unknown. Toxins produced by blue-green algae can accumulate in the organs of fish.

According to Josh Jensen, Public Health Program Manager, with SCPHD, “Children and pets are particularly susceptible. Exposure to the toxins produced by cyanobacterial HABs may result in life-threatening liver damage, neurological problems such as muscle spasms, decreased movement, labored breathing, convulsions, and possible death.”

HABs develop when specific types of photosynthetic bacteria bloom, at times forming dense visible mats. These can occur in rivers, lakes, and ponds. Warm, slow moving water with high nutrient levels, particularly phosphorous, can create conditions that allow algae to grow very quickly. Typically these conditions occur during the warmer months of summer and early fall. HABs tend to shrink dramatically as the water temperature drops in mid to late fall.

DEQ will continue to monitor water quality until the bloom dissipates and will advise the public when the concern no longer exists.

More information is available at <http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/surface-water/blue-green-algae/>

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Other Links

<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/EnvironmentalHealth/HarmfulAlgalBlooms/tabid/2174/Default.aspx>