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Reports of Wide-Spread Harmful Algal Blooms on Cayuga, Owasco and Skaneateles Lakes

The Cayuga County Health Department has been informed by the New York State Department of Environmental (NYSDEC) that Harmful Algal Blooms continue to be present and wide-spread on Cayuga and Skaneateles Lakes. In addition, we confirmed with the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection Program that HABs continue to be present and are wide-spread on Owasco Lake.

After blooms were identified in early August on Owasco Lake near the water intakes, the Cayuga County Health Department initiated our sampling and monitoring plan for Owasco Lake, which consisted of weekly samples at both the City of Auburn and Town of Owasco water treatment plants. At the same time, out of abundance of caution, both the City of Auburn and Town of Owasco water treatment plants turned on their carbon treatment systems to mitigate the chances of toxins getting into the drinking water. Last week algae was seen in the water entering the City of Auburn treatment plant. The Health Department increased our sampling and monitoring to twice a week at both treatment plants. Toxins have not been detected in any samples collected this year.

Cayuga Lake is the source of water for Wells College and the Village of Aurora. With HABs now being wide-spread on Cayuga Lake the Cayuga County Health Department will implement our sampling and monitoring plan for Cayuga Lake.

Results of our sampling can be found on the Health Department's website under the Harmful Algal Blooms tab, www.cayugacounty.us/health

Skaneateles Lake is the source of drinking water for the Town and Village of Skaneateles, City of Syracuse and other surrounding towns and villages. The Onondaga County Health Department is responsible for sampling and monitoring of the drinking water. For more information visit: www.ongov.net/health

In addition, many lake front residents use water drawn from these three lakes for their own private water supply. You should never drink untreated surface water (water that is drawn from the lake, at any depth), whether or not harmful algal blooms are present; however, if harmful algal blooms are located near your intake pipe, avoid drinking or using the water for making infant formula, making ice, brushing teeth, preparing food, bathing and washing dishes. In-home treatments such as boiling, disinfecting water with chlorine or ultraviolet radiation (UV), and water filtration units do not remove the toxins associated with harmful algal blooms.



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The Cayuga County Health Department continues to remind the public to Know It, Avoid It and Report It.

KNOW IT

Bodies of water that are discolored with a paint-like or filmy appearance or floating scum should always be avoided as they are potentially harmful. Images of these types of blooms as well as non-harmful blooms can be viewed at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/81962.html>.

AVOID IT

Never swim, fish, boat, wade or eat fish caught in water with blooms. Bloom or no bloom, never drink, prepare food, cook, or make ice with a private water supply drawn directly from a lake that is untreated or improperly treated. During a bloom, private water supplies drawn directly from the lake should not be used for showering, bathing, or washing dishes even if treatment is provided. Public water supplies that draw water from surface water are treated, disinfected and monitored. The public would be notified by the Cayuga County Health Department if public water supplies are impacted by Harmful Algal Blooms.

REPORT IT

Please be vigilant and report any bloom seen on Owasco Lake to the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection Program at (315) 427-5188. If a bloom is present on Cayuga Lake, the Cayuga County Health Department asks that you report it to the Cayuga Lake HABs Harrier at habshotline@gmail.com. If a bloom is present on Skaneateles Lake, please contact the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Inspection Program at (315) 685-6486. If the bloom is present on another water body in Cayuga County, please report it to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) at HABsinfo@dec.ny.gov.

If you feel that you or your pets are experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, irritation of the skin, eyes, or respiratory system due to exposure to a harmful bloom, please contact your health care provider or veterinarian.

For more information regarding harmful algal blooms visit: www.cayugacounty.us/health and click on the Harmful Algal Blooms tab. Should anyone have questions, please call the Cayuga County Health Department at 315-253-1560.
