

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17, 2024

Media Contact: Linda Scarborough, PIO Western Region, Linda.Scarborough@vdh.virginia.gov

Harmful Algae Bloom Advisory for Mill Creek Lake in Amherst County *Public Advised to Avoid Water Contact*

Amherst County, Va. – Mill Creek Lake in Amherst County is experiencing a harmful algae bloom (HAB). The Virginia Department of Health is warning citizens to stay out of the water and to keep their pets and children out as well. **The public is advised to avoid contact with the lake until algae concentrations return to acceptable levels.** Some harmful algae, called cyanobacteria, can cause skin rash and gastrointestinal illnesses, such as upset stomach, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

People and pets are advised to avoid swimming, as well as other activities that pose a risk of ingesting water. Due to low body weight, children and pets are at greater risk of severe illness if the water is ingested. Activities such as boating may continue with proper precaution in advisory areas.

Algae blooms can occur when warm water and nutrients combine to make conditions favorable for algae growth. Most algae species are harmless; however, some species may produce irritating compounds or toxins. Avoid discolored water or scums that are green or bluish-green because they are more likely to contain toxins.

To prevent illness, people should:

- Avoid contact with any area of the lake where water is green or an advisory sign is posted,
- **WHEN IN DOUBT, STAY OUT!**
- Not allow children or pets to drink from natural bodies of water.
- Keep children and pets out of the areas experiencing a harmful algae bloom and quickly wash them off with plenty of fresh, clean water after coming into contact with algae scum or bloom water.
- Seek medical/veterinarian care if you or your animals experience symptoms after swimming in or near an algal bloom.
- Properly clean fish by removing skin and discarding all internal organs and cook fish to the proper temperature to ensure fish fillets are safe to eat.

The area to avoid can be seen on an interactive [Harmful Algal Bloom](#) map. To lift advisories, there must be two acceptable samples collected at least 10 days apart. District health departments may accept results for samples collected less than 10 days apart at their discretion.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Virginia Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force, which includes the VDH, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Old Dominion University Phytoplankton Laboratory, will continue to monitor water quality in the lake. In general, advisories will be lifted following two consecutive test results with acceptable levels for algal cell counts and/or toxin concentration.

Contact the Harmful Algal Bloom Hotline at 1-888-238-6154 if you suspect you experienced health-related effects following exposure to a bloom.

Visit www.SwimHealthyVA.com to learn more about harmful algae blooms or to report an algae bloom or fish kill.

#