

August 21, 2020

To the managers and users of Lake Wallenpaupack –

Sampling conducted on August 17, 2020 at locations on Lake Wallenpaupack – including the areas near Epply Island and Burns Island – indicated the potential for a harmful algal bloom (HAB).

Laboratory analyses of the sample indicated concentrations of cyanobacteria – also known as blue-green algae – up to 2,970 colonies per millileter (colonies/mL), which is above the avoid contact threshold for human primary contact recreation activities (e.g., swimming) currently recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force of 1,500 colonies/mL. Additional laboratory analyses of the samples for potential HAB toxins – also known as cyanotoxins – are pending.

Cyanobacteria density thresholds, in colonies/mL, for human primary contact recreational use currently recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force

response level	cyanobacteria density
Advisory (Yellow)	300
Avoid Contact (Red)	1,500

Based on these results and the hot, sunny weather conditions since the sample was collected, the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force recommends that the managers and users of Lake Wallenpaupack continue to be vigilant for HABs. In particular, the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force recommends that the managers and users of Lake Wallenpaupack:

1. Continue to be vigilant for HABs in the lake by observing visual conditions, especially near swimming beaches, boat docks and in other areas where people and pets may come in contact with HABs.
2. If visual conditions are observed, collect additional samples to be analyzed for cyanobacteria and cyanotoxin concentrations from areas that include swimming beach areas to determine if cyanotoxin concentrations and cyanobacteria densities are below the advisory and avoid contact thresholds recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force
3. Pending results of additional sampling, consider issuing a HAB watch, advisory, or avoid contact response for the areas of the lake affected by HABs
4. Keep pets from swimming in and drinking affected water, and be aware of symptoms of HAB-associated illness in both humans and animals, such as diarrhea or vomiting, difficulty breathing, dizziness, and weakness or lethargy. If you or your pet show any of these symptoms, contact your primary care provider or veterinarian.

If you have any health-related questions about HABs, please contact the Division of Environmental Health Epidemiology at the Pennsylvania Department of Health at env.health.concern@pa.gov. For other inquiries about HABs or to report a suspected HAB, contact the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force at HABs@pa.gov. For additional information on HABs, see www.dep.pa.gov/OurCommonWealth/Pages/Article.aspx?post=44.

Sincerely,

The Pennsylvania Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Task Force*

* Members of the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force include:

- the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection;
- the Pennsylvania Department of Health;
- the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources;
- the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture;
- the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission;
- the Pennsylvania Game Commission; and
- the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

To the managers and users of Lake Wallenpaupack –

Sampling conducted on August 17, 2020 at locations on Lake Wallenpaupack – including the areas near Epply Island and Burns Island – indicated the potential for a harmful algal bloom (HAB).

Laboratory analyses of the August 17th samples indicated concentrations of cyanobacteria – also known as blue-green algae – up to 2,970 colonies per millileter (colonies/mL), which is above the avoid contact threshold for human primary contact recreation activities (e.g., swimming) currently recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force of 1,500 colonies/mL. **Additional laboratory analyses of the August 17th samples for potential HAB toxins – also known as cyanotoxins – indicate that toxin concentrations were below detection limits and below advisory thresholds recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force.**

Follow-up samples were collected August 24th from several locations on the lake, and also indicated elevated concentrations of cyanobacteria. Results of analyses of the August 24th samples for potential HAB toxins are pending.

Cyanobacteria density thresholds, in colonies/mL, for human primary contact recreational use currently recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force

response level	cyanobacteria density
Advisory	300
Avoid Contact	1,500

What does this mean?

The samples collected August 17th contained very low concentrations of HAB toxins, but relatively high concentrations of organisms capable of producing HAB toxins. The follow-up samples collected August 24th also indicated the potential for toxic HAB conditions. Analyses of the August 24th samples for potential HAB toxins are underway.

Based on these results, the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force recommends issuing a **HAB Advisory** for areas of Lake Wallenpaupack where people and pets are most likely to be in contact with the water, including public beaches, boat docks, and boat access areas. A HAB Advisory indicates that toxic HAB conditions may be present.

The Pennsylvania HABs Task Force also recommends issuing a **HAB Watch** for other areas of the lake, and that people on and near the lake stay out of the water and keep pets out of the water anywhere where there are visual indications of a potential HAB. A HAB Watch indicates that conditions make a waterbody susceptible to HABs.

HABs can take on a variety of appearances. Some common visual indications of HABs are water that is usually clear appearing bright green, opaque, or otherwise discolored; with a soupy appearance, paint-like streaks, surface scum, or floating mats or globs near the water surface or along the shoreline. **Here are some examples of what HABs can look like...**



Additional sample collection and analyses are underway and the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force will continue to work with Lake Wallenpaupack partners to monitor the situation.

Based on these results and the hot, sunny weather conditions since the samples were collected, the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force also recommends that the managers and users of Lake Wallenpaupack continue to be vigilant for HABs. In particular, the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force provides the following recommendations to the managers and users of Lake Wallenpaupack:

Lake Managers:

1. Continue to be vigilant for HABs in the lake by observing visual conditions, especially near swimming beaches, boat docks, boat access areas, and other areas where people and pets may come in contact with HABs.
2. If visual indications suggest a potential HAB, especially in areas where people or pets are likely to come in contact with the water, additional samples should be collected and analyzed to determine if cyanotoxin concentrations and cyanobacteria densities are below the advisory and avoid contact thresholds recommended by the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force.

3. Pending results of additional sampling, consider issuing a HAB **watch**, **advisory**, or **avoid contact** response for the areas of the lake affected by HABs.

Lake Users:

1. Continue to be vigilant for HABs in the lake by observing visual conditions, especially near swimming beaches, boat docks, boat access areas, and other areas where people and pets may come in contact with HABs.
2. If visual indications suggest a potential HAB, people should stay out of the water and keep pets out of the water in those areas. Water users should also wash themselves and their pets immediately after contact with untreated water showing visual indications of a potential HAB.
3. Water users should be aware of symptoms of HAB-associated illness in both humans and animals, such as diarrhea or vomiting, difficulty breathing, dizziness, and weakness or lethargy. If you or your pet show any of these symptoms, contact your primary care provider or veterinarian.

If you have any health-related questions about HABs, please contact the Division of Environmental Health Epidemiology at the Pennsylvania Department of Health at env.health.concern@pa.gov. For other inquiries about HABs or to report a suspected HAB, contact the Pennsylvania HABs Task Force at HABs@pa.gov. For additional information on HABs, see www.dep.pa.gov/OurCommonWealth/Pages/Article.aspx?post=44.

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