

## **Guidelines for Responding to Blue-Green Algae /Harmful Algal Blooms, June 2011**

These guidelines are intended to assist with responding to reports of blue-green algae blooms from the public, staff, or other partners, and making a decision on whether to collect field samples. We do not have the staffing resources to conduct a site visit for every instance of a bloom; however there may be certain instances where it is appropriate for documentation purposes. Also, we are continuing to work with DHS on tracking and documenting occurrences of Harmful Algal Blooms associated with human or animal illnesses and exposures. Any questions please contact:

Gina LaLiberte 608-221-5377 [Gina.LaLiberte@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Gina.LaLiberte@wisconsin.gov)  
or Tim Asplund 608-267-7602 [Tim.Asplund@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Tim.Asplund@wisconsin.gov)  
and/or Emelia McAuliff DHS 608-267-3242 [Emelia.McAuliff@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Emelia.McAuliff@wisconsin.gov).

Note – Much of this information is contained in the *Blue-Green Algae Communication Strategy* dated June 2011.

<http://intranet.dnr.state.wi.us/int/water/wm/lakes/algae/>

### **I. CITIZEN INQUIRIES AND REPORTS OF SEVERE BLOOMS OR ILLNESS**

#### **A. General Questions about Blue-Green Algae**

1. Direct the caller to the location of the blue-green algae information page on the WDNR website: <http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/bluegreenalgae/> and <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/bluegreenalgae/>

2. If the caller asks to speak to a WDNR staff, please direct the call to the **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator**. If the Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator is not available, please direct the call to the **Statewide Limnologist**.

Gina LaLiberte; Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator 608-221-5377  
Tim Asplund, Statewide Limnologist 608-267-7602

#### **B. Reports of Blue-Green Algae Blooms on Specific Water bodies**

1. Identify which WDNR Region has jurisdiction of the water in question and direct the person to the appropriate **Blue Green Algae Coordinator (\*) or Lake Coordinator**:

Northeast Region:

\*Robin McLennan 920-424-7894  
Mary Gansberg 920-662-5489  
Ted Johnson 920-787-4686 x3017  
Greg Sevener 715-582-5013

Northern Region (Lake Coordinator: Ashland, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor):

\*Jim Kreitlow 715-365-8947

Northern Region (Florence, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Vilas):

Kevin Gauthier, Sr. 715-365-8937

Northern Region (Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Washburn):

Pamela Toshner 715-635-4073

South Central Region:

\*Susan Graham 608-275-3329

Southeast Region:

\*Heidi Bunk 262-574-2130

West Central Region (Buffalo, Chippewa, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, St. Croix, Vernon):

\*Ken Schreiber 715-839-3798

Patrick Sorge 715-839-3794

West Central Region (Adams, Clark, Juneau, Marathon, Portage, Wood):

\*Scott Provost 715-421-7881

Patrick Sorge 715-839-3794

2. **Regional Blue-Green Algae Coordinator or Lake Coordinator** should:

- a) Advise the person making contact of the blue-green algae information page on the DNR website: <http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/bluegreenalgae/> . In general, the message should be "if it looks bad, and smells bad, they (and their pets) should probably stay out of the water."
- b) Record the facts of the report including the name and address of the person making the contact.
- c) Immediately direct the person making the report to their primary physician if they are reporting any health issues.
- d) If they have further concerns about human health and safety, or any ongoing monitoring, advise them to contact their **local health department**.
- e) Notify the **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** via E-mail or phone call with the facts as recorded. If the Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator is not available, please notify the **Statewide Limnologist**.
- f) Notify **Regional Watershed Expert, Water Basin Supervisor**, and other regional staff as needed.

3. Discuss options for site visits and other follow-up actions with **Regional Blue-Green Algae Coordinator, Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator and DHS contact** (*see next Section II below*).

Options for follow-up activity may include:

- (a) Visual assessment of site, along with photo documentation
- (b) Sample collection for blue-green algae identification and enumeration, and/or
- (c) Toxin analysis, possibly including rapid assessment test strips

**C. Reports of Human Illnesses or Exposures**

1. Direct the person to immediately contact their personal physician or emergency room for assessment. Alternatively, direct the person to the:  
Poison Information Hotline @ 1-800-222-1222
2. Direct the person to the DHS "Report a Case" website:  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/bluegreenalgae/>
3. Contact **Regional Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** (copy **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator**) and describe any relevant facts of the report such as:
  - a) Name and phone number of person making contact.
  - b) Name and location of water body involved, and any other specific details of the incident that may help with later follow-up.
4. **BGA Coordinator** will consult with **DHS contact** to see if HAB samples should be collected

#### D. Reports of Animal Illnesses or Deaths

1. Direct the person to immediately contact their personal veterinarian for assessment.
2. Direct the person to the DHS “Report a Case” website:  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/bluegreenalgae/>
3. Contact **Regional Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** (copy **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator**) and describe any relevant facts of the report such as:
  - a) Name and phone number of person making contact.
  - b) Name and location of water body involved, and any other specific details of the incident that may help with later follow-up.
4. **BGA Coordinator** will consult with **DHS contact** to see if HAB samples should be collected

#### II. CONDUCTING A FIELD VISIT AND/OR COLLECTING A SAMPLE:

*In general, the Department does not have the staff or resources to conduct a follow-up visit or collect samples for every report of a blue-green algae bloom. However, there may be circumstances in which follow-up actions are warranted; for example, particularly severe or unusual blooms, water bodies not known to have had blooms in the past, or cases involving potential human or animal illness in conjunction with DHS.*

- A. Protocol for responding to potential human health exposure, illness, or animal death...
  1. Be sure information is submitted to DHS via Report a Case website...  
<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/bluegreenalgae/>
  2. Work with DHS contact to determine if and where to sample, and specifics of case
  3. Consult HAB sampling protocol in the sampling kit for more information.
- B. In addition to requests generated by DHS and cases of severe illness or animal death, there are limited instances in which DNR staff may choose to collect samples:
  - a) DNR-managed beaches or properties to assist with decision-making on notification of beach-users
  - b) New occurrence or report of a bloom on a previously undocumented water body
  - c) Waterbody of concern where documentation of bloom conditions and potential toxins would be important to supplement other water quality information (e.g. impaired water listing, TMDL development, etc)
2. Site visit could include photo documentation, collecting a sample for a microscope scan by field staff, or using a toxin test strip to determine whether further follow-up analysis is warranted
- 3) Before collecting samples for full lab analysis, consult with **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** and **DHS contact**.

#### III. ACTION STEPS DRIVEN BY MONITORING RESULTS

The SLOH database has been programmed to automatically flag algal toxin results that exceed certain thresholds and will generate an email alert to the **Statewide Blue-green Algae Coordinator**. In addition, the Environmental Toxicology Department will notify the **Statewide** and appropriate **Regional Blue-green Algae Coordinator** about samples with high counts of blue-green algae, or positive results from ELISA toxin tests.

- A. **Information Sharing:** When WDNR receives information from the SLOH on samples with the presence of high counts of blue-green algae (> 5,000 natural units/ml and/or > 100,000 cells/ml), or on the presence of blue-green algal toxins (microcystin >0.99 µg/L, anatoxin A >0.49 µg/L, or cylindrospermopsin >0.49 µg/L), this information will be summarized by the **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** (or **Statewide Limnologist**) along with other relevant data, and will be shared with:
  1. Local Public Health Agency through the County Public Health Officer, and DHS.

2. The appropriate **Regional Public Affairs Manager, Statewide Limnologist, Regional Water Leader, Watershed Program Expert, Regional Blue-Green Algae Coordinator, and Water Basin Supervisor.**
3. If a State Park or State Forest is located on the water body in question, the **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** will also notify the **Regional Land Leader, Regional Park Manager and Park Supervisor** as appropriate.
4. If the water body is Lake Winnebago or another potential source of drinking water, **Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator** will notify the **Drinking Water and Groundwater Program contact.**

**B. Follow-Up Action:** Responsible parties are requested to take the following steps to ensure clear communication as deemed appropriate.

1. **DHS and/or Local Health Department Staff** may choose to:
  - a) Send a message out to local health agencies through DHS's Health Alert Network;
  - b) Post an advisory at appropriate public access points on the water body in question;
  - c) Close beaches in accordance with Chapter 254.46 of the Wisconsin Statutes;
2. **WDNR Regional Water Staff** may choose to:
  - a) Initiate a more detailed taxonomic examination of the sample or analyze for algal toxins if not already done, or
  - b) Flag the water body for follow-up monitoring and assessment.
  - c) Factors affecting this decision will be the magnitude of screening count, the genera present, whether the sample was collected at a beach, and whether there have been any reports of illness at that location.
  - d) If additional samples are to be collected, please coordinate with the Statewide Blue-Green Algae Coordinator and the State Laboratory of Hygiene staff, and Science Services SLOH Liaison to ensure that adequate funding is available to cover the associated costs.

### **Additional Contacts**

Larry Landsness, Drinking Water and Groundwater  
608-267-7647 [larry.landsness@wisconsin.gov](mailto:larry.landsness@wisconsin.gov)

Candy Schrank, Fisheries Toxicologist  
608-267-7614 [candy.schrank@wisconsin.gov](mailto:candy.schrank@wisconsin.gov)

Jean Rygiel, Bureau of Parks and Recreation  
608-264-6042 [jean.rygiel@wisconsin.gov](mailto:jean.rygiel@wisconsin.gov)

Dawn Perkins, State Laboratory of Hygiene Algal Counts & Toxin Testing  
608-224-6230 [daperkins@mail.slh.wisc.edu](mailto:daperkins@mail.slh.wisc.edu)

Mark Werner, Department of Health Services (effects of blue-green algae on human health)  
608-266-7480 [Mark.Werner@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Mark.Werner@dhs.wisconsin.gov)

For further contacts refer to ***Blue-Green Algae Communication Strategy*** dated June 2011. Found on the DNR Intranet site for the Watershed Bureau under Lakes.  
<http://intranet.dnr.state.wi.us/int/water/wm/lakes/algae/>