



Board of County Commissioners

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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NEWS RELEASE

Public Highly Advised to Avoid Coming into Contact with Water in Elmer Lake & Portion of Salem River in Salem County Due to Harmful Algal Bloom

The Salem County Department of Health and Human Services is advising the public to avoid coming into contact with water in Elmer Lake and a portion of the Salem River (between Kings Highway and County Home Rd) in Salem County due to water sampling conducted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) confirming the presence of a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB).

The NJDEP issued an "Advisory" alert tier for both waterbodies, which indicates a confirmed HAB with moderate risk of adverse health effects and increased potential for toxins above public health thresholds. The NJDEP and Salem County Department of Health and Human Services highly advise the public to avoid swimming, coming into contact with the water, consuming any fish caught from both waterbodies, or consuming the water. The public is also advised that pets and livestock should not consume the water. Caution should be used when kayaking. At this time, fishing and boating are considered acceptable activities.

Exposure to cyanobacteria, which causes Harmful Algal Blooms, can result in a range of health effects, including rashes, allergy-like reactions, flu-like symptoms, gastroenteritis, respiratory irritation and eye irritation. Symptoms can occur in sensitive individuals even at levels below the New Jersey Health Advisory Guidance.

Exposure to a Harmful Algal Bloom that is actively producing cyanotoxins may result in more serious health effects, including liver toxicity and neurological effects. The New Jersey Health Advisory Guidance recommends the public avoid swimming in or coming in contact with water when sampling indicates the production of cyanotoxins above a certain level. NJDEP sampling and monitoring detected 1.54 ug/L of



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microcystins in Elmer Lake and 8.2 ug/L of microcystins in the Salem River. Microcystins are a type of cyanotoxin produced by cyanobacteria. These levels of cyanotoxin increase the potential for moderate health risks.

The NJDEP with assistance from the Salem County Department of Health and Human Services, will continue to monitor water quality through visual surveillance. Once the blooms are no longer visible the water will be tested by the NJDEP. It is difficult to predict how long a Harmful Algal Bloom will last. Once the HAB has reached safe levels the advisory will be lifted and public notices removed.

For information on Harmful Algal Blooms and NJDEP testing and aerial surveillance data, visit dep.nj.gov/hab/.

Please report a suspected HAB by calling the NJDEP Hotline at 1-877-WARNDEP (877-927-6337).