# Idaho Cyanobacteria Recreational Waters Response Plan

## Communication Guidelines for Protecting Public Health



**State of Idaho, Department of Environmental Quality**

**Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health**

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols

| | |
|---|---|
| µg | microgram |
| cyanoHAB | cyanobacteria harmful algal bloom |
| DEQ | Idaho Department of Environmental Quality |
| DHW | Idaho Department of Health and Welfare |
| EPA | United States Environmental Protection Agency |
| FAQ | frequently asked question |
| ISDA | Idaho State Department of Agriculture |
| L | liter |
| mg | milligram |
| mL | milliliter |
| PHD | public health district |
| RUV | recreational use values |

# Purpose Statement

The *Idaho Cyanobacteria Recreational Waters Response Plan* is intended to serve as a coordinated plan for communication between staff of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) Division of Public Health, Idaho public health districts (PHDs), and other partners and stakeholders to protect public health when a potential cyanobacteria harmful algal bloom (cyanoHAB) is reported. Roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- DEQ conducts scientific investigations of reported blooms, reports and manages data, answers ecology-specific questions, provides input into changes to water body risk ratings, and provides recommendations to the DHW and PHDs.
- DHW issues and lifts public health advisories and other related necessary press releases based on reported data. DHW provides educational material and consultation on the health effects of cyanobacterial toxins, investigative protocols for responding to reports of human illness, and outbreaks of waterborne illness; tracks trends in human illness and deaths; provides input into changes to water body risk ratings; maintains the Idaho Recreational Water Health Advisory map; and communicates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding Idaho cyanoHABs associated with human illness.
- PHDs field health-related questions. They issue press releases and provide education at the beginning of cyanoHAB season (prior to or at onset of first cyanoHAB event). CyanoHAB educational materials are available on the PHD website. The PHD assists DHW, DEQ, water body managers, and the public in better understanding the health risks of cyanoHABs and the toxins and irritants they produce.
- The entity or entities responsible for managing water body access are asked to assist DHW and DEQ in posting public health notices and cyanoHAB cautionary signs.

# 1 Introduction

Cyanobacteria are an important, natural component of Idaho lakes and rivers and are also present in home aquariums as well as the soil in residential lawns and indoor potted plants. Under certain environmental conditions, however, cyanobacteria populations can rapidly increase to levels that interfere with the recreation and beneficial domestic uses of a water body. This rapid increase is often referred to as a bloom.

Many species of cyanobacteria, including those found in Idaho lakes and reservoirs, produce toxic compounds known as cyanotoxins. Cyanobacterial growth depends on several environmental conditions. Predominantly, these include nutrient concentration, light intensity, and temperature. Toxin production may offer cyanobacteria a number of ecological advantages, including grazing defense, allelopathy (inhibiting the growth of competitors), assistance in nutrient uptake, iron-scavenging, oxidative stress, carbon-nitrogen metabolism, homeostasis maintenance, and as an infochemical (Holland and Kinnear 2013).

Cyanobacterial harmful algal blooms (cyanoHABs) can be unsightly and often have variable appearance in the form of foam, scum, or mats on the surface of water—especially near the shoreline. The different cyanobacteria species have a wide range of colors, including blue, green, brown, yellow, orange, or red.

When organisms in a bloom die and decompose, cyanoHABs can release unpleasant odors (like the smell of rotting plants) (CDC 2025). Cyanobacteria were formerly known as blue-green algae and many Idaho residents still use that term.

Mats and scums can represent thousand-fold to million-fold concentrations of cyanobacterial cell populations and published microcystin concentrations have ranged up to 24 milligrams/liter (mg/L) from scum material (Chorus and Bartram 1999).

## 1.1 Health Concerns

Through their production of cyanotoxins, cyanobacteria blooms can cause eye, ear, and skin irritation as well as gastrointestinal illness, and they can severely affect neurological systems. Humans who ingest these toxins may develop muscle cramps, twitching, paralysis, cardiac or respiratory failure, and in rare occasions death. Symptoms can occur within less than an hour of exposure but may take days to develop depending on the toxin and its concentration (CDC 2016–2022). Table 1 provides a summary of common cyanobacteria in Idaho and their acute health effects.

The following are the most common routes of exposures to cyanobacteria and their toxins during recreational activities:

- Oral from accidental or deliberate ingestion of contaminated water.

- Dermal by direct contact of exposed body parts with water containing cyanotoxins. Cyanobacteria cells can also accumulate in bathing suits, particularly diving suits, exposing skin to toxins.
- Inhalation through the aspiration of water containing cyanotoxins.

**Table 1. Common cyanobacteria found in Idaho, the toxins they produce, and symptoms (adapted from EPA 2022).**

| Genera | Cyanotoxins | Acute Health Effects in Humans |
|---|---|---|
| Planktonic: *Microcystis*, *Dolichospermum*, *Planktothrix, Gloeotrichia, and Woronichinia*<br>Benthic: *Microcoleus/Tychonema, Oscillatoria, Phormidium, Nostoc,* and *Scytonema* | Microcystins | Abdominal pain, headache, sore throat, vomiting and nausea, dry cough, diarrhea, blistering around the mouth, and pneumonia |
| Planktonic: *Aphanizomenon*, *Dolichospermum*, *Lyngbya,* and *Raphidiopsis (Cylindrospermopsis)*<br>Benthic: *Microseira/Tychonema, Oscillatoria, Nostoc, Scytonema* | Cylindrospermopsin | Fever, headache, vomiting, bloody diarrhea, liver inflammation, and kidney damage |
| Planktonic: *Aphanizomenon*, *Microcystis*, *Dolichospermum*, Raphidiopsis (Cylindrospermopsis), *Cuspidothrix,* and *Woronichinia*<br>Benthic: *Microcoleus/Tychonema, Oscillatoria, Phormidium, Nostoc; Scytonema* | Anatoxin-a group | Tingling, burning, numbness, drowsiness, incoherent speech, salivation, and respiratory paralysis leading to death[a]. |
| Planktonic: *Aphanizomenon, Dolichospermum*, *Cuspidothrix,* Raphidiopsis (Cylindrospermopsis)<br>Benthic: *Microcoleus/Tychonema, Phormidium, Nostoc; Scytonema* | Saxitoxin | Nausea, vomiting, cranial nerve dysfunction, a floating sensation, headache, muscle weakness, parasthesias and vertigo, respiratory failure, and death can occur from paralysis |

a. Respiratory symptoms observed in animals.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Division of Public Health (DHW) and Idaho public health districts (PHD) environmental health directors agree with using the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) 2019 recommended guidelines for microcystins and cylindrospermopsin (Table 2). The parameters used to calculate values protective of child health include incidental ingestion values and mean body weight for children 6 through 10 years of age. Based on the qualitative nature of the data available for the youngest children and given that the mean values were similar, EPA (2019) concluded that the values reported in the *Exposure Factors Handbook* are protective of children of all ages, including those younger than 6. Additionally, in 2025 Idaho recommended health advisory levels for Anatoxin-a and Saxitoxin following the finalization of an extensive toxicological literature review by the DHW.

**Table 2. Health advisory recommendations for microcystins, cylindrospermopsin, anatoxin-a, and Saxitoxin.**

| Cyanotoxin | Microcystin | Cylindrospermopsin | Saxitoxin | Anatoxin-a |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health Advisory Water Quality Threshold (µg/L) | 8 | 15 | 8 | 15 |

### Health Concerns for Livestock and Pets

Livestock and pets can potentially be exposed to higher concentrations of, or have increased exposure to, cyanotoxins than humans because they are known to consume cyanobacterial scum and mats and drink cyanobacteria-contaminated water (Backer et al. 2013). Dog fur acts as a filter that collects and concentrates cyanobacterial cells while in the water, and dogs receive a concentrated dose of cells from licking their fur after swimming in a water body with an ongoing bloom (Chorus et al. 2000). Common signs of cyanotoxin poisonings in pets include repeated vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, abdominal swelling, stumbling, seizures, convulsions, disorientation, inactivity, or skin rashes and hives (MacNeill 2014; Trevino-Garrison et al. 2015). The Oregon Health Authority developed dog-specific recreational use values (RUV) for cyanotoxins in recreational water for informational purposes (Oregon Health Authority 2019) (Table 3).

**Table 3. Dog-specific recreational use values for cyanotoxins (µg/L).[a]**

| | Anatoxin-a | Cylindrospermopsin | Microcystin | Saxitoxin |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dog RUV** | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.02 |

a. Informational values only. Health Advisories will not be issued for livestock and pets. Report results exceeding these thresholds to DHW.

# 2 CyanoHAB Response Goals and Objectives

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), DHW, and PHDs will work together to identify cyanoHABs and inform the public, stakeholders, and partner organizations and agencies of their existence to minimize unintentional exposure to associated toxins and irritants and associated morbidity and mortality.

## 2.1 DEQ's Objectives

DEQ's objective include the following:

- Characterize Idaho's waters through observation, testing, and monitoring when a suspected cyanoHAB is observed, or reported to the agency.
- Relay scientific information and recommendation to the appropriate offices when a bloom is in progress, so the risk rating from available information correctly characterizes the severity of the danger to water body users.

- Assist the PHDs, DHW, water body managers, and the public in better understanding the aquatic ecology of cyanobacteria and cyanotoxins.
- Update the cyanoHAB risk data table on *DEQ's cyanoHABs web page*.
- Provide a statewide reference for active or ongoing cyanoHABs (spreadsheet with cyanoHABs calls and results).
- Provide cyanoHAB educational materials on website.
- Update the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, One Health Harmful Algal Bloom System database with reported illnesses and health advisories.
- Stay current with the science of cyanobacteria and cyanoHABs.
- Use available limited resources to accomplish the preceding objectives.

## 2.2 Public Health Districts' Objectives

The public health districts' objectives include the following:

- Issue press release and education at beginning of cyanoHAB season (prior to or at onset of first cyanoHAB event). Issue other cyanoHAB health information when possible or previously agreed to with DEQ's CyanoHAB Lead.
- Provide cyanoHAB educational materials on website.
- Assist DEQ, water body managers, and the public in better understanding the health risks of cyanobacteria and the toxins and irritants they produce.

## 2.3 DHW Objectives

The DHW's objectives include the following:

- Issue cyanoHAB health advisories other health information when data or information provided by DEQ recommends it, as outlined in section 3.4, Table 4.
- Provide cyanoHAB educational materials on website.
- Maintain the DHW *Idaho Recreational Waters* web page.
- Maintain the DHW *Idaho Recreational Water Health Advisories* map.
- Conduct surveillance for human illnesses associated with a cyanoHAB.
- Provide consultation on press releases and other forms of public notification as needed.
- Submit waterborne outbreak report through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Outbreak Reporting System for human illness outbreaks associated with a cyanoHAB.
- Notify appropriate partners and stakeholders when a health advisory or other bloom-related press release is issued.

**Note:** DHW has a subgrant with DEQ to assist in or carry out certain objectives listed in this section, through DEQ's cyanoHAB Lead.

## 2.4 Local Water Body Management Entity Objectives

This section covers water bodies and facilities managed or operated by a single or few entities (e.g., a city or county for a water body within a city or county park and canal and irrigation companies).

- Inform DEQ when a cyanoHAB is suspected or reported.
- Provide photos for DHW and DEQ to use in outreach efforts (agency websites, traditional media, and social media).
- Assist DHW efforts to inform users about the risks associated with recreating in a water during a cyanoHAB event and with posting signs when appropriate and removing signs when risk has dissipated.
- Assist DEQ with observations and monitoring of active cyanoHABs.
- Use available limited resources to accomplish the objectives above.

The following sections describe a process that assists DEQ and DHW with identifying and informing the public when cyanoHABs exist to prevent unintentional exposure to cyanoHAB-associated cyanotoxins.

## 2.5 Reporting

Potential cyanobacterial blooms may be identified by DEQ during site visits, reported by the public including citizen science volunteers, referred to DEQ by other agencies, or identified through other available sources of information. Report cyanoHABs events using *DEQ's online form*, by email at *algae@deq.idaho.gov*, or by calling (866) 671-5385.

### Citizen Science

DEQ's CyanoHAB Lead manages the volunteer citizen scientists from the Idaho Master Naturalist chapters across the state who assist with cyanoHAB monitoring efforts. The Master Naturalists earn education hours and have experience participating in citizen science projects.

Volunteers are directed to priority water bodies when monitoring is needed and DEQ staff are unavailable. Volunteers are encouraged to submit observations and photographs collected through the EPA BloomWatch app so that citizen science project metrics for success are easily identified and tracked. Additionally, volunteer observations may be recorded on data sheets that are provided and submitted with photographic evidence through existing DEQ reporting tools.

## 2.6 Investigation

DEQ, tribal organizations, or in some cases, Idaho Power are responsible for investigating potential cyanoHABs. However, if water body managers or other trusted partners have the resources to investigate, DEQ can work with them to interpret data. Using established protocols and methods, each investigation should document the presence or absence of a potential cyanoHAB using the best means available to the responsible DEQ regional office.

### Information Gathering

A variety of information types and sources are important when investigating the presence of a cyanoHAB, including, but not limited to the following:

- Toxin level confirmation by laboratory analysis
- Genus level identification and enumeration of cells
- Presence/absence confirmation using test strips
- Qualitative on-site testing, including the “stick test” and “jar test”
- Visual observation or imagery
- Remote sensing data

While laboratory testing can be expensive and results may take time, it should be a priority whenever possible because it helps determine if cyanotoxin levels are above or below health-based safety thresholds. Threshold values for issuing health advisory press releases are provided in Table 2. When laboratory analysis is not available, illness reports, field observations, field testing, remote sensing data, and other relevant information may be used to issue a health advisory. See section 3.4.1 for more information.

Genus level identification of cyanobacteria provides insight into whether the organisms present in the water can produce cyanotoxins, and which cyanotoxins could be produced. Density of toxigenic cyanobacteria is not directly correlated to toxin concentration in the water but is an effective way of assessing potential risk, as greater concentrations of cyanotoxin-producing cells translates to greater likelihood of higher concentrations of cyanotoxin in the water. Determining toxigenic cell density is a useful and important tool for quickly informing the public of cyanoHABs risks during high recreation periods.

Presence/absence confirmation using test strips, jar and stick tests, pictures and on-site observations, and remote sensing data are all useful predictors of cyanoHABs. Individually or combined, these tools can be used as the basis for assessing risk, provided the information is reviewed and interpreted by appropriate personnel.

Always prioritize quantitative data and expertise to the greatest degree that is reasonable and achievable, regardless of the methods and information used to determine the level of risk.

## 2.7 Risk Assessment and Public Notification

The cyanoHAB risk rating and communication table (Table 4) addresses the most significant challenges faced by DEQ and its partners to protect the public and keep them informed of cyanoHABs. The table uses a tiered approach and lowers the barrier for communicating risk to the public using existing tools.

Tiers are identified using a color progression (yellow, orange, and red), similar to color-coded systems used to promote safety in industrial environments, laboratories, and fire safety in recreation areas. The tiered approach takes advantage of preexisting associations between color and risk to reduce the likelihood of public confusion. The color progression allows the

public to easily interpret complex risk information. The tiered approach also supports public health priorities by removing financial and logistical barriers to sharing important safety information. While definitive proof that toxin levels exceed thresholds is considered protective by the State of Idaho and EPA and is a valid basis for issuing a public health advisory, testing is not always available and other standards shall be considered:

- Time—Laboratory results may take as long as 2 weeks to receive from the date a sample is submitted.
- Cost—The cost of confirming cyanotoxin concentrations through laboratory analysis can be prohibitive, especially where funding needs are already allocated toward large projects, or compliance activities.
- Predictability—Location, appearance, and cyanotoxin concentration all have the potential to change significantly over a short period of time. While one sample may contain no detectable cyanotoxin, or a low concentration, a sample taken in the same location in the following days may contain enough to cause significant adverse health effects.

**Table 4. CyanoHAB risk rating and communication table.**

| | Health Advisory | Alert | Watch |
|---|---|---|---|
| Toxigenic cell density [1, 2, 3, A] | 100,000 (cells/mL) | 20,000 (cells/mL) | A cyanoHAB watch indicates evidence of a potentially toxic bloom without confirmed presence of toxigenic cells or cyanotoxins.<br><br>Field observations, photographic evidence, satellite imagery including REACT and CyAN are sources and types of information that can trigger a cyanoHAB Watch. Other sources and types of evidence may be used as determined by appropriate personnel. |
| Microcystins [1, 2, 3, 8, B] | 8 µg/L | 1.6 µg/L | |
| Cylindrospermopsin [3, 4, 8, B] | 15 µg/L | 3 µg/L | |
| Anatoxin-a (µg/L) [4, 5, 7] | 15 µg/L | See Footnote C | |
| Saxitoxin (µg/L) [4, 6, 7] | 8 µg/L | See Footnote C | |
| Recreational Water Microcystins Test Strip [D] | – | Clear Presence | |
| Other Triggers<br>*No testing available - If laboratory testing is unavailable to confirm cyanotoxin concentrations, health advisories will be issued using reduced threshold criteria outlined in section 3.4. | Verified human illness outbreak.<br><br>At the request of tribal representatives, or water body managers, with adequate evidence. | Reported human or animal illnesses are likely associated with a cyanoHAB.<br><br>At the request of tribal representatives, or water body managers, with adequate evidence. | |
| Recommended Actions | Issue health advisory.<br>Post signage.<br>Add health advisory information to DHW advisory map.<br>Add health advisory information to DEQ's cyanoHAB web page.<br>Share information through social media.<br>Send health advisory information email subscribers. | Post signage if needed.<br>Add cyanoHAB alert to DHW advisory map.<br>Add cyanoHAB alert info to DEQ web page.<br>Share information through social media when possible. | Post signage if needed.<br>Add cyanoHAB watch information to DHW advisory map.<br>Add cyanoHAB Watch information to DEQ web page.<br>Share information through social media when possible. |
| Risk Level Demotion [E] | End of recreation season | 30 Days | Two Weeks |

[1] WHO, 2003. Guidelines for safe recreational water environments, Volume 1, Chapter 8: Algae and cyanobacteria in fresh waters.
[2] WHO, 2021. Toxic cyanobacteria in water (Second Edition).
[3] EPA, 2019. Recommended human health recreational ambient water quality criteria or swimming advisories for microcystins and cylindrospermopsin.
[4] OHA, 2021. Advisory Guidelines for Harmful Cyanobacteria Blooms in Recreational Waters.
[5] CWQMC, 2016. California Water Quality Monitoring Council. Cyanobacteria guidance for recreational and related water uses (2016).
[7] IDHW, 2025. Anatoxin-a and Saxitoxin Recreational Health Advisory Threshold Literature Review.
[8] EPA, 2015. Drinking Water Health Advisories for Cyanotoxins.
[A] Human symptoms have been reported between 5,000–100,000 cells/mL (EPA 2019). At 5,000–100,000 cells/mL, DEQ and agency partners should take into account contextual information and consider issuing public notice.
[B] 1.6 µg/L Microcystins and 3 µg/L Cylindrospermopsin are drinking water health advisory thresholds for school aged children and adults[8]. In recreational waters, these provide a useful and beneficial benchmark of protection for public and private surface water drinking water system users, small children and animals, and cases of persistent exposure.
[C] No lower benchmark levels are currently in place for Saxitoxin and Anatoxin-a. DEQ should review contextual information and consider issuing public notice when either exceeds minimum detection levels.
[D] While test strips are not an ideal tool for quantifying Microcystins concentrations, they are, at a minimum, effective as a presence/absence test. If digital test strip readers are available going forward, to provide accurate readings, DEQ should consider using test strip results in determining whether a health advisory should be issued.
[E] Risk level demotion can be avoided by demonstrating that the current level of risk persists.

## 2.8 Contingency Planning

Generally, health advisories are issued when cyanotoxin concentrations, determined by laboratory testing, have exceeded the thresholds identified in Table 4. However, when laboratory confirmation is unavailable, health advisories are still issued to ensure the public is informed about possible cyanoHABs, so they can make the informed decision about entering a water body.

### 2.8.1 Health Advisories—Laboratory Testing Unavailable

When laboratory testing is unavailable, the threshold for issuing a health advisory is changed to ensure the public is informed and able to make decisions based on information provided in the advisory. Without the ability to submit samples for laboratory analysis, a health advisory should be issued immediately, if any one of these conditions is met:

- A human or animal illness or death is attributable to cyanotoxin poisoning.
- The primary management agency, including tribal authorities, requests it.
- Test results shared by trusted outside sources exceed the health advisory threshold.

Additionally, when laboratory testing is unavailable, a health advisory should be issued when DHW and DEQ determine it necessary based on the following types of information, individually or collectively.

- On-site observational data
- Photographic evidence
- Satellite Imagery
- Test strip results
- Sufficient presence of toxigenic cells
- Water body's history of cyanoHABs

### 2.8.2 Cost-Saving Measures

When resources or laboratory capacity limit testing, the following measures may be used to reduce costs and the number of samples submitted for analysis:

- Test Strips—Microcystin test strips are not accurate enough to rely on for issuing health advisories when laboratory testing is available. However, when testing is limited, they may be used to help determine whether submitting samples is necessary. Carefully follow the instructions, consider the sampling location and technique, and use professional judgement when evaluating the results. If the test strip indicates that microcystin levels could be above 8 µg/L, collect a sample for the laboratory.
- Lifting Health Advisories—When resources or laboratory capacity limit testing, health advisories may remain in place until the end of the recreational season, without further testing.

## 2.9 Communication Plan

The following sections outline PHD, DEQ, and DHW roles once a cyanoHAB is identified. A separate, region-specific, communication plan was created so any change in personnel will not affect this response document, requiring new review. The communication plan is available to partner agencies and organizations.

The DHW or PHD issues public health advisories. In the first instance of a cyanoHAB event in the district, the PHD may release a public service announcement and distribute educational materials on their website and social media. The PHD and DEQ may distribute public health advisories and related information from DHW on social media and their websites.

### 2.9.1 DEQ State and Regional Offices

The DEQ State Office CyanoHAB Lead follows up with State Office drinking water staff to ensure they are aware of the bloom. The State Office Communications staff updates the cyanoHAB web pages with testing results and data collection. The CyanoHAB Lead also contacts the DHW and Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

Each DEQ regional office should identify the water body managers and other relevant stakeholders on water bodies with recurring cyanoHABs (e.g., lake associations, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and Idaho Power) so they can be aware of blooms, communicate with their stakeholders, and work together to post signs.

If a bloom is reported in a city park, county park, or state park water body, the DEQ regional office should notify the city park and recreation department (or equivalent management agency) so the local agency can coordinate public notification with the PHD or DHW and either assume responsibility for monitoring or coordinate with the DEQ regional office.

DEQ is not be responsible for testing and reporting on private ponds or lakes.

### 2.9.2 DHW

The DHW maintains and updates a cyanoHABs FAQ page with links to educational materials at *Idaho Recreational Waters*. The DHW *Idaho Recreational Water Health Advisories* display recreational water health information across Idaho, including cyanoHAB risk ratings.

### 2.9.3 Public and Media Communication

Questions from press or media contacts should be referred to the appropriate agency as described below.

- PHD
  - Field health-related questions
  - Issue press release and education at beginning of cyanoHAB season (prior to or at onset of the first cyanoHAB event).
  - Provide educational materials on website.

  - Assist DHW, DEQ, water body managers, and the public in better understanding the health risks of cyanobacteria and the toxins and irritants they produce.
- DEQ
  - Field environmental-related questions at *algae@deq.idaho.gov*.
  - Manage cyanoHAB-reported events submitted through the *DEQ's online form*, by email at *algae@deq.idaho.gov*, or by calling (866) 671-5385.
  - DEQ answers ecological-related questions only. Nonecological questions are redirected to the appropriate PHD or DHW.
  - Phone calls to DEQ from the general public should be referred to the appropriate regional office staff. If staff is not available, refer callers to the DEQ State Office.
  - DEQ's *cyanoHAB web page* provides resources to assist with identifying and reporting blooms, including *FAQs* and the *Idaho DEQ Cyanobacteria Harmful Algal Bloom Information* storymap. Links are available for the recreational water health advisories, online reporting form, and to subscribe for cyanoHABs updates.
  - A DEQ employee contacted by the media shall refer to the most recent FAQ, notify the State Office, and report all media contact to *mediacontact@deq.idaho.gov*.
- DHW
  - Answers questions related to the recreational water health advisories map and web page.
  - Answers questions related to health advisories issued.
  - Directs ecological-related calls to DEQ and region/water body-specific questions to the appropriate agency.

## 2.10 Monitoring and Observation

The frequency of monitoring activities may depend on the location of the water body, the amount of recreation use the water body receives (e.g., heavily used urban water body versus a remote location), and the travel time required to reach the site. With the goal of protecting public health, the investigator should make a reasonable effort to monitor the water body once every 30 days, or more frequently if it appears the extent and risk associated with a potential bloom is growing.

The DEQ investigator shall notify DEQ's CyanoHAB Lead when evidence indicates that the risk rating needs to be changed. The Lead informs the PHD, DHW, and other appropriate partners and stakeholders.

The cyanoHAB risk data table on the DEQ cyanoHAB web page is updated through information submitted by regional office staff, so updated information should be submitted in a timely manner.

## 2.11 Public Health Risk Lifted

CyanoHABs are complicated and can vary throughout the water body, so cautionary language is included in public notification messages that lift health advisories and warnings. At a minimum,

the agency deciding to lift an advisory should share the information via social media and ensure web pages are updated to reflect the advisory status in a timely manner.

# 3 Plan Revisions

This response plan is designed to be a living document. The scientific knowledge on cyanobacteria is changing rapidly, and our understanding of the potential consequences of human and animal contact with cyanotoxins is steadily increasing. When information and actions in this document are no longer current, no longer protect public health, or no longer serve the needs or capabilities of DEQ, DHW, or the PHDs, the DEQ CyanoHAB Lead should be consulted about proposed changes. Updates are implemented by the DEQ CyanoHAB Lead after receiving approval from the DHW Environmental Health Program Manager, with a notice of the change and an explanation sent to the DEQ regional offices. Changes to related monitoring and response documents should be done following the same approval process.

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