

MEDIA RELEASE

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Shuswap water quality monitors prepared to respond to algae blooms

Several water quality monitoring organizations are ready and willing to respond to an algae bloom in the Shuswap watershed this summer, if the need arises.

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) recently facilitated the development of a regional algae bloom response plan for the Shuswap watershed. The plan complements and builds upon a provincial protocol for cyanobacteria response.

The plan outlines regular water quality monitoring activities of up to 10 different organizations, including local governments, local First Nations, the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, First Nations Health Authority, BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and BC Parks. Depending on where and when an algae bloom may occur, any of these organizations could collect water quality samples to help authorities understand the potential public health risk or ecological implications.

“We need a collaborative approach to monitoring algae blooms,” explains Erin Vieira, program manager for the SWC, which is a partnership of many of the aforementioned organizations. “Our current reality is that a single agency can’t do it on their own.”

“Shuswap Lake is the primary source of drinking water for the City of Salmon Arm, and many residents in the surrounding area. It goes without saying that we have to protect the health of the lake,” explains Rob Niewenhuizen, Director of Engineering and Public Works for the City of Salmon Arm. “The City has shared resources and assisted in collecting water samples and performing visual monitoring of the lake during past algae bloom events.”

Of particular importance is the risk that cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, can pose to public health. These types of algae can produce microcystin toxin which may be harmful to people, pets, and livestock. Interior Health has indicated they are committed to working with partners to post the appropriate notifications at affected sites, if necessary.

The Shuswap algal response plan comes on the heels of an announcement by the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change about a [new website, Algae Watch](http://www.gov.bc.ca/algaewatch) (www.gov.bc.ca/algaewatch), which is an educational resource for the public to become more informed about algae blooms and to submit observations of algae blooms throughout BC. Interior Health has also published a new website about blue-



green (cyanobacteria) blooms. That website can be found through [this link](#), or by navigating: interiorhealth.ca > Your Environment > Recreational Water Safety > Beach Water Quality > Algae Blooms.
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About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership organization that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap.

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