

UTAH

Utah Lake now under shore-to-shore warning for toxic algal blooms

Lake-wide warning issued Monday by health officials

By Amy Joi O'Donoghue | @Amyjoi16 | Sep 9, 2019, 6:14pm MDT



Keith Clarke, left, avoids stepping in the water as he and Craig Burr reattach his boat to the trailer following a quick test float following a repair at the American Fork Boat Harbor on Utah Lake on Monday, Sept. 9, 2019. Clarke says he never floats on the lake anymore because of the constant algae and the shallow waters. | Colter Peterson, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — The shallow waters of Utah Lake are now under a shore-to-shore public health advisory due to outbreaks of harmful algal blooms, with restrictions local health officials say will remain in effect for the entire month.

The public health warning issued Monday comes after cyanobacterial cell counts in three open water sampling locations revealed numbers that surpassed the safe recreation health-based standard, meaning people should avoid contact with the water to avoid exposure.

The cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, can contain toxins that cause liver damage or nerve damage.

Utah County health officials say due to the variable nature of harmful algal blooms this time of year, the warning will remain in effect for September.

The health department is placing advisory signs at seven permanent locations at the lake, which annually suffers infestations of harmful algal blooms due to a number of reasons, including stagnant weather, hot temperatures and its shallow nature.

GRID VIEW



Keith Clarke wipes down his boat at American Fork Boat Harbor after a quick test run on Utah Lake on Monday, Sept. 9, 2019. The Utah Department of Environmental Quality has issued a lakewide warning advisory after outbreaks of harmful algal blooms. Clarke says he never floats on the lake anymore because of the constant algae and the shallow waters. | Colter Peterson, Deseret News

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Scientists with the Utah Department of Environmental Quality and multiple other entities are engaged in research to combat the algal bloom problem at Utah Lake through efforts fueled by grants and money allocated by the Utah Legislature.

The lake, the third-largest freshwater lake in the United States west of the Mississippi, is a recreation hot spot for many along the Wasatch Front. It is home to the endangered June sucker fish, which exist nowhere else and can live to be 40 years old, according to the Utah Lake Commission.

It is also home to five public boat harbors and/or marinas.

While this year hasn't been as active as some summer seasons for harmful algal blooms, outbreaks have happened in multiple locations, including Ogden Valley's Pineview Reservoir.

The algal blooms, besides being a public health hazard, are harmful to other aquatic life.

The algae problem is not limited to central Utah, as the Bear River Health Department in northern Utah announced Monday that it has closed the North Beach of the Mantua Reservoir just north of the boat deck.

It also issued a warning for the rest of the reservoir after samples collected in the lake showed high cyanobacteria cell-count densities.

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Can you say pollution and global warming?

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WagTheHippo 6 hours ago

The state should sponsor grants for developing methods to remedy the conditions that cause these blooms. The scope of the problem means that ideas well outside the regulatory framework of the DEQ are needed; that's where the best solutions often come from.

Make some substantial research money available to anyone and everyone who can invent ways to make the lake less likely to support algal blooms. Reward big thinkers with the possibility of reaping great rewards for real success.

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Harrison Bergeron 6 hours ago

We need to dredge the lake. It's too warm. A cooler lake would not support cyanobacteria. It would also help with water conservation. Currently Utah lake loses 50% of its inflow to evaporation. Cooling it down would reduce the vapor pressure and save water.

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Harrison Bergeron 6 hours ago

We need to dredge the lake. Deeper would mean colder. And colder would mean no cyanobacteria.

It would also mean more water conservation. Currently the lake loses half of its inflow to evaporation.

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Impartial7 10 hours ago

Quit pumping waste water into the lake. Quit running all those new homes storm drains into the lake. Utah never learns. If they don't change their habits and take care of the lake, it won't be of any value to anyone.

Conservatives?

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