

6/24/11

RE: Harmful Algae Bloom (HAB) sampling results for 2010, with corrected results for 2009

Dear CSLAP lake association representative:

The purpose of this letter is to provide the results of testing performed on HAB samples collected from your lake during the summer of 2010, along with a revised report for 2009. The 2009 reports were primarily revised due to a refinement in the measurement methodology. The changes in the 2009 reports did not result in any significant changes to the data as a whole nor its subsequent interpretation. The 2010 report as well as the 2009 revised reports specific to your lake are provided as attachments to this letter.

**Project Background:** HAB sampling was conducted under a 5 year cooperative agreement between the CDC and the NYS DOH to i) document HAB occurrence and any potentially related illnesses or symptoms, ii) improve the DOH's ability to analyze for HAB toxins and iii) ultimately reduce exposure to HABs.

The DOH is working closely with the DEC and the NYS Federation of Lake Associations (FOLA) to collect HAB samples in conjunction with their long-term volunteer based Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP). Lake associations were asked to participate in HAB sampling under this cooperative agreement if their lake is eutrophic (high in nutrients), has a history of HABs, or is classed as being capable of being a drinking water source. If the associations chose to participate, volunteers generally collected samples once per month, August through October. The samples were collected at the routine surface monitoring site on regularly scheduled CSLAP monitoring dates. If present, bloom samples were collected on these dates, as well as on other non-CLASP monitoring dates when and where blooms were observed. The bloom samples were generally collected in near-shore areas where blooms are concentrated by winds or at locations such as beaches where HAB exposures are most likely to occur. Although cyanobacteria can produce a number of different toxins, only microcystin concentrations were measured. Microcystin was selected because it is the cyanobacterial toxin most often detected in NYS.

**Information about HABs:** Lake users should follow any water-use advisories or beach closures and avoid contact with any highly colored waters, accumulations of HAB materials, or scums at all times. If you or your pet come in contact with these blooms, it is best to gently wipe or wash the bloom materials off as soon as possible. If needed, recreational lake users should seek medical attention if they experience symptoms of HAB exposure as described in the attached DOH Information Bulletin. The Information Bulletin provides background and information on potential health effects and advice on minimizing HAB exposures. There are currently no formal numerical guidance values for microcystin exposure in NYS or the United States as a whole, and NYS DOH has a workgroup currently evaluating published numeric guidance values and other measureable bloom characteristics for their use in issuing recommendations and advisories regarding HAB contact. Regardless, the NYS DOH recommends avoiding contact with all dense

blue-green algae blooms, because other toxins can be present (e.g. dermal and/or neurotoxins), and bloom density and/or toxicity can change rapidly.

Please note the attached NYS DOH fact sheet stressing that it is not advisable to use surface waters as a source for unregulated, non-public drinking water. We also want to stress that boiling, personal filtration or other field/home treatments may not remove HAB toxins from drinking water.

**Results:** Microcystin concentrations from the sampling performed on your lake during the Summer/Fall 2010 are presented on the attached report. In order to help you place these results in context, we also provided frequency graphs showing the distribution of microcystin concentrations measured during 2010. In order to provide further context for your lake's results, the attached report also provides a brief discussion of guidance values from other states and organizations based on cell counts, microcystin values, and various other measures of water quality.

We ask that if you hear of any illnesses around your lake that may be HAB related to encourage the individuals to contact us (Jim Hyde or Erin DeConno, at 518-402-7711 or [jbh01@health.state.ny.us](mailto:jbh01@health.state.ny.us) and [emd04@health.state.ny.us](mailto:emd04@health.state.ny.us)), so that we can document the symptoms in association with bloom data in CDC's secure on-line database.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

James Hyde  
Research Scientist  
Bureau of Water Supply Protection

Attachments: