

Is Green Scum Coming to a Favorite Lake Near You?

Part II: What You Should Do if it Does

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Last month, this column focused on information about cyanobacteria, and what can trigger a harmful algal bloom (HAB) in local water bodies. This month, the focus is helping you to recognize cyanobacteria, and what can be done to protect our NH water bodies.

How will I know cyanobacteria if I see it? Cyanobacteria can make the water appear blue, green, brown, gold, or red. They often produce scum, mats, foam, or paint-like streaks in the water or clumps on the shore. Only testing can determine if a bloom is harmful.

See a bloom (or not sure)? Call or text a photo to the **NHDES hotline at (603) 848-8094 or to HAB@des.nh.gov**.

What can I do to keep cyanobacteria from spoiling my swimming plans this summer? Always look for posted advisories and check out the water before you enter. Stepping into the shower after a swim is also recommended. Cyanobacteria can be lethal to canines so keep them out of suspect waters. Check for advisories at the NHDES website before you head out or sign up for tweet alerts. https://twitter.com/NHDES_Beaches.

What can we do to protect the lakes we love? Keeping NH lakes healthy and beautiful is the mission of NH Lakes, a statewide nonprofit, as well as local lake and watershed associations. Supporting organizations like these through membership and engagement can help promote lake-friendly policies and community-wide action.

The SLA, for example, is working through NHDES to advise the NH Department of Transportation on the need to keep equipment well-calibrated so that excess road salt is not used in the Stinson Lake watershed.

Likewise, NH Lakes is advocating for a bill in the NH legislature (House Bill 276-FN) to establish a cyanobacteria mitigation fund that would assist lake and watershed associations and local communities to implement projects to reduce the pollution entering our lakes.

There is much that homeowners can do, as well. Keeping septic systems pumped and well-maintained, minimizing the use of lawn fertilizers and road salt, and reducing the amount of storm water runoff will help. NH Lakes explores these topics plus more in an online resource for homeowners entitled "LakeSmart". <https://nhlakes.org/lakesmart/>

What's the bottom line? If the water looks scummy or has an oily slick, don't leap in-- and make sure that your dog and kids stay out too!



Photo credit: NHDES