



proud past. promising future

NEWS RELEASE

July 22, 2009

Contact: Tom Gonzales, Clark County Public Health
(360) 397-8412; tom.gonzales@clark.wa.gov
Brian Potter, Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation
(360) 619-1123; brian.potter@ci.vancouver.wa.us

Vancouver Lake closed to swimmers due to E. coli and blue-green algae ***Vancouver Lake Regional Park will remain open to the public***

Vancouver, WA – Clark County Public Health and Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation are advising the public to avoid direct contact with water at Vancouver Lake due to elevated levels of E. coli bacteria and blue-green algae revealed by routine testing. Because exposure to either E. coli bacteria or blue-green algae can cause disease, public health officials are recommending:

- No swimming or wading
- No wind surfing or sail boarding
- No water contact for animals
- Precautions against contact with water while boating or fishing

“It is especially important to keep children out of the lake because they are more likely to swallow some of the water than adults,” said Dr. Alan Melnick, Clark County Health Officer. The health warning will remain in effect until tests show that E. coli levels do not exceed Washington State and US Environmental Protection Agency guidelines, and blue-green algae levels do not exceed World Health Organization guidelines.

Vancouver Lake Regional Park will remain open to the public. Water within the restrooms and shelters is unaffected by the lake water and remains safe to drink.

Clark County Public Health will continue to test the lake and will advise the public when water contact is considered safe again. Swimmers are encouraged to visit the Vancouver-Clark Parks & Recreation Web site at <http://www.cityofvancouver.us/parks-recreation/> for other swimming options.

Information about E. coli

E. coli is a common kind of bacteria that lives in the intestines of animals and people. The presence of E. coli in Vancouver Lake water indicates that the water may contain bacteria found in animal or human feces. Some of these bacteria are capable of causing severe gastrointestinal illness.

-- MORE --

Depending on the cause, people with gastrointestinal infections may experience fever, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea beginning several hours to several days or longer after exposure. Some infections, such as E. coli 0157:H7 may cause bloody diarrhea. Taking antibiotics or over-the-counter, anti-diarrhea medicines can make some infections worse. People who experience bloody diarrhea or persistent gastrointestinal symptoms should call their physician or other healthcare provider.

Information about blue-green algae

A blue-green algal bloom is a rapid and massive buildup that gives the water a scummy texture and a green color. It may also appear bluish, brownish or reddish green. A bloom may appear during warm weather, usually between May and October.

Warm, sunny weather and the presence of nutrients can cause algal blooms. Nutrients that enter the water and promote algal blooms include phosphorus and nitrogen, found in fertilizers and in agricultural, human, and animal waste.

Some algae may contain toxins that can lead to liver injury, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In addition, the toxins can damage the nervous system and lead to muscle tremors, paralysis and respiratory distress. Skin irritations, allergic reactions, rashes and blisters also are possible. Symptoms may occur within minutes or appear hours or days later following exposure. If you have had contact with the water and experience any of these symptoms, you may wish to contact your health care provider. Because warm blooded animals, such as cats, dogs and livestock are at risk from exposure, please keep pets out of the lake.

PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER COMMUNITY