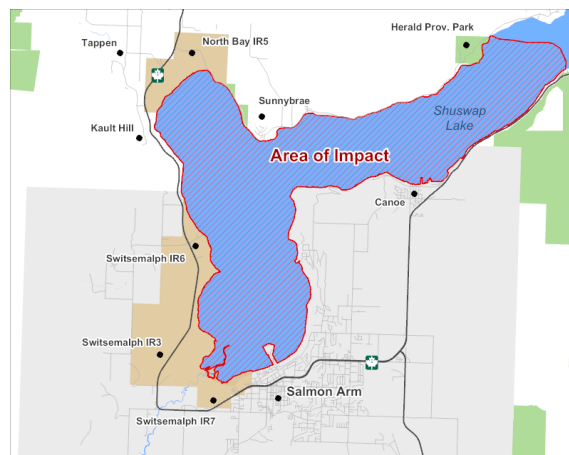


For Immediate Release | August 11, 2020

IH provides regional update on large algal bloom in Shuswap Lake

SALMON ARM – Interior Health, the Ministry of the Environment and the First Nations Health Authority are working with the City of Salmon Arm, the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, and Shuswap Watershed Council to monitor a large algal bloom that has filled most of the Salmon Arm of Shuswap Lake.

This algal bloom was first detected on July 22. At this time, on-site environmental testing indicates this bloom is primarily non-harmful green algae with very low numbers of cyanobacteria algae and the risk to the public remains low.



During warm summer months, algal blooms are known to occur in many of the lakes, ponds, and wetlands found throughout B.C. Some of these blooms can be dominated by cyanobacteria algae (also known as blue-green algae), which can quickly grow into large masses called cyanobacteria blooms.

Cyanobacteria algae can produce a toxin that may be harmful if it is swallowed or if it comes in contact with skin. Boiling water will not remove cyanotoxin or algae from the water. It is also important to note that after a bloom has ended cyanobacteria toxins can still persist in the water.

At this time, despite the appearance of water with green algae, Shuswap Lake remains safe for all recreational activities, as well as for public drinking water systems that use the lake as its primary drinking water supply. However, visitors and residents are reminded not to drink or cook using untreated water directly from lakes, ponds, or wetlands due to the risk of waterborne illnesses.

Interior Health will continue monitoring the situation for levels of cyanobacteria algae in Shuswap Lake and continue working with drinking water system operators responsible for monitoring the safety of the source water for public drinking water systems.

Additional Information on blue-green algae is available at HealthLinkBC, <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/blue-green-algae>

