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## Martin County Health Department

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 8, 2005**

### **St. Lucie River Warning Lifted**

The Martin County Health Department has lifted the health warning to avoid contact with St. Lucie River water. This change is the result of the South Florida Water Management District sampling in October that shows no detects of blue green algae toxins in the river, and the last two months of Martin County Health Department enteric bacteria sampling results that show acceptable levels in the river.

Blue green algae are commonly found in fresh water ponds and rivers in Florida. Light, temperature and the water's nutrient content play a role in algae growth. Some blue green algae can produce substances that are known to be toxic. Over time, these toxins are diluted and eventually break down and disappear. It is not possible to tell by just looking at a bloom whether a bloom is toxic. Additional sampling will be conducted by the South Florida Water Management District and results will be monitored by the Martin County Health Department.

Enteric bacteria (both fecal coliform and enterococci), normally inhabit the intestinal tract of humans and animals. The presence of enteric bacteria is an indication of fecal pollution which may cause human disease, infections or rashes. There are an almost infinite number of sources of enteric bacteria which include stormwater runoff, agricultural operations, overflowing sewage treatment systems, illegal sewage spills, etc. With the tremendous number of sources it can be difficult to identify the exact source. The Martin County Health Department will continue weekly bacteria sampling and monitoring.

For further information on health issues related to contact with river water, please contact Bob Washam, (772) 221-4090, at the health department. For historical bacteria results of all Martin County beaches sampled, visit the Martin County Health Department's Internet Beach Water Quality website ([www.myfloridaeh.com](http://www.myfloridaeh.com), click on the drop down arrow and then select "Beach Water Quality" and then select "Martin County).

For further information on surface water quality contact the South Florida Water Management District at 1-800-432-2045, and/or the Florida Department of Environmental Protection at (561) 681-6600.

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