



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH OFFICIALS CAUTION ABOUT BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BLOOM AT WEEKI WACHEE RIVER – RICHARD DRIVE

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Spring Hill, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health in Hernando County (DOH-Hernando) is cautioning the public of the presence of a blue-green algae blooms in the Weeki Wachee River – Richard Drive. This is in response to water samples taken on April 18, 2024. The public should exercise caution in and around Weeki Wachee River – Richard Drive.

Blooms have the potential to produce toxins, and what triggers them to do so remains poorly understood. Since bloom conditions can change at any time, it is important to exercise caution as if the bloom were toxic, even if toxin presence has not yet been confirmed.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- You should not drink, swim, wade, water ski or engage in activities that may cause you to come in direct contact with waters where there is a visible bloom.
- Exercise caution when using personal watercraft or boating, to avoid stirring up or contacting the algae or the affected water.
- Avoid getting affected water in your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your skin and clothing with soap and water if you have contact with algae or discolored or smelly water.
- You should keep pets and livestock away from the waters in this location.
- Eating fillets from healthy fish caught in freshwater lakes experiencing blooms is safe. Rinse fish fillets with tap or bottled water, throw out the guts and cook fish to appropriate temperature.
- You should not eat shellfish from this location.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and partners collect algae samples from reported bloom locations for toxin analysis. Once completed, the results will be posted on the DEP [Algal Bloom Dashboard](#), and can also be viewed on the [Protecting Florida Together](#) website, where you can sign up to be notified of the latest conditions.

What is blue-green algae?

Blue-green algae are a type of bacteria that is common in Florida's freshwater environments. A bloom occurs when rapid growth of algae leads to an accumulation of individual cells that discolor water and often produce floating mats that emit unpleasant odors.

Some environmental factors that contribute to blue-green algae blooms are sunny days, warm water temperatures, still water conditions and excess nutrients. Blooms can appear year-round but are more frequent in summer and fall. Many types of blue-green algae can produce toxins.

Is it harmful?

Blue-green algae blooms can impact human health and ecosystems, including fish and other aquatic animals.

For additional information on potential health effects of algal blooms, visit floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/aquatic-toxins.

Find current information about Florida's water quality status and public health notifications for harmful algal blooms and beach conditions by visiting ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov. *Protecting Florida Together is the state's joint effort to provide statewide water quality information to prioritize environmental transparency and commitment to action.*

What do I do if I see an algal bloom?

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection collects and analyzes algal bloom samples. To report a bloom to DEP, call the toll-free hotline at 855-305-3903 or report [online](#).

To **report fish kills**, **contact** the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute at 1-800-636-0511.

Report symptoms from exposure to a harmful algal bloom or any aquatic toxin to the Florida Poison Information Center, call 1-800-222-1222 to speak to a poison specialist immediately.

Contact your veterinarian if you believe your pet has become ill after consuming or having contact with blue-green algae contaminated water.

If you have other health questions or concerns about blue-green algae blooms, please call the Florida Department of Health in Hernando County at 352 540 6812.

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The Department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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