



Fact Sheet

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCIES | www.CaWaterQuality.net

Are Harmful Algal Blooms Affecting Our Waters?

Monitoring Council and its California Cyanobacteria and Harmful Algal Bloom Network deliver seventh "My Water Quality" web portal

Overview

At the height of the 2016 bloom season, the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (Monitoring Council) unveiled its seventh *My Water Quality* web portal to connect decision makers and the public with water quality and ecosystem health information. The theme of this new portal is "Are harmful algal blooms affecting our waters?" View the new portal from California's *My Water Quality* website, www.MyWaterQuality.ca.gov.

The new California Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Portal includes interactive maps and monitoring data that focus on the location, extent, and status of harmful algal blooms in California lakes, reservoirs, rivers, and marine waters. Existing blooms in both freshwaters and marine waters are presented through interactive maps and lists. A Toolbox to identify toxic and non-toxic algae, to monitor and assess, and to report a bloom are featured. Resources for public health officials, drinking water purveyors, lake and reservoir managers, water quality professionals and the public are made available in a timely and user-friendly manner.

What are cyanobacteria and harmful algae and why should I be concerned?

At the base of the food chain in fresh, brackish, and marine ecosystems are photosynthetic cyanobacteria and algae. When conditions are optimal, including light and temperature, elevated nutrient levels, and lack of water turbulence, cyanobacteria and some algae can quickly multiply into a harmful algal bloom (HAB). These conditions have been heightened by drought and climate change. Some cyanobacteria and harmful algae can produce toxic chemicals, including cyanotoxins, domoic acid and other algal toxins. Toxic algal blooms are threatening drinking water supplies and causing wildlife and domestic animal deaths. In humans they can cause a wide range of symptoms, from rashes and allergic reactions to liver damage and even death. HABs present serious challenges to recreational water uses, drinking water providers, and water body managers.

Why Was This New Tool Developed?

In 2006, new California legislation mandated coordination of water quality monitoring and assessment activities among organizations, both inside and outside California government, and delivery of the resulting data and information to decision makers and the public via the internet. The Monitoring Council was formed in 2007 by a cooperative agreement between the California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Natural Resources Agency for this purpose. In 2009, the Monitoring Council released its first two internet portals, *Is it Safe to Swim in Our Waters?* and *Is it Safe to Eat Fish and Shellfish from Our Waters?* Beginning in 2010, portals were added detailing the extent and condition of California's aquatic ecosystems.

The Monitoring Council brings together water quality and ecosystem health information from a variety of organizations with special expertise in harmful algal bloom monitoring and assessment, coordinated through the California Cyanobacteria and Harmful Algal Bloom (CCHAB) Network. State, federal, regional, and tribal agencies and non-governmental organizations have pitched in to answer your water quality questions. A key

player in coordinating monitoring, response, and reporting has been the Water Boards' Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP).



How Do I Get More Information?

More information about the Monitoring Council and its expert stakeholder work groups is on the web at http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/.

More information on the California Cyanobacteria and Harmful Algal Bloom (CCHAB) Network is at http://www.mywaterquality.ca.gov/monitoring_council/cyanoHab_network/.

Subscribe online to receive email updates regarding activities of the CCHAB Network under the General Interests tab at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.shtml.

SWAMP information is online at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/swamp/.

My Water Quality

Are harmful algal blooms affecting our waters?

CYANOBACTERIA AND HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM NETWORK OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL

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California Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

HAB events represented below are voluntarily reported to the State Water Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program. Data provided are for general information purposes only and may contain errors. The exact location, extent and toxicity of the reported bloom may not be accurate and may not be affecting the entire waterbody. The data are subject to change as new information is received. Please check back for updates.

- More detailed information on freshwater HAB events

Toolbox

- Report a Bloom
- Signs and Guidance for Posting
- Field Guide and Forms
- Resources for Labs

News and Announcements

- Training and Collaboration
- Current Advisories
- Bulletins & Newsletters
- California CyanoHAB Network

Questions Answered

- What are harmful algal blooms?
 - What are harmful algae?
 - Why are they important?
 - Where do they come from?
 - Why should I be concerned?
 - What are the impacts?
 - Swimming & recreation
 - Drinking water
 - Fish & shellfish harvesting
 - Domestic animals
 - Wildlife
- Where are harmful algal blooms occurring?
 - HABs event maps
 - Freshwaters
 - Marine waters
 - Satellite map
- What can I do about a bloom?
 - How do I identify harmful algae?
 - How can I report a bloom, or a related animal illness or human illness?
- What resources and guidance are available to address harmful algal blooms?
 - Recreational Water Uses
 - Drinking Water
 - Shellfish Harvesting
 - Monitoring

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