



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harmful Algal Bloom recreational advisory issued for the Ohio River and tributaries

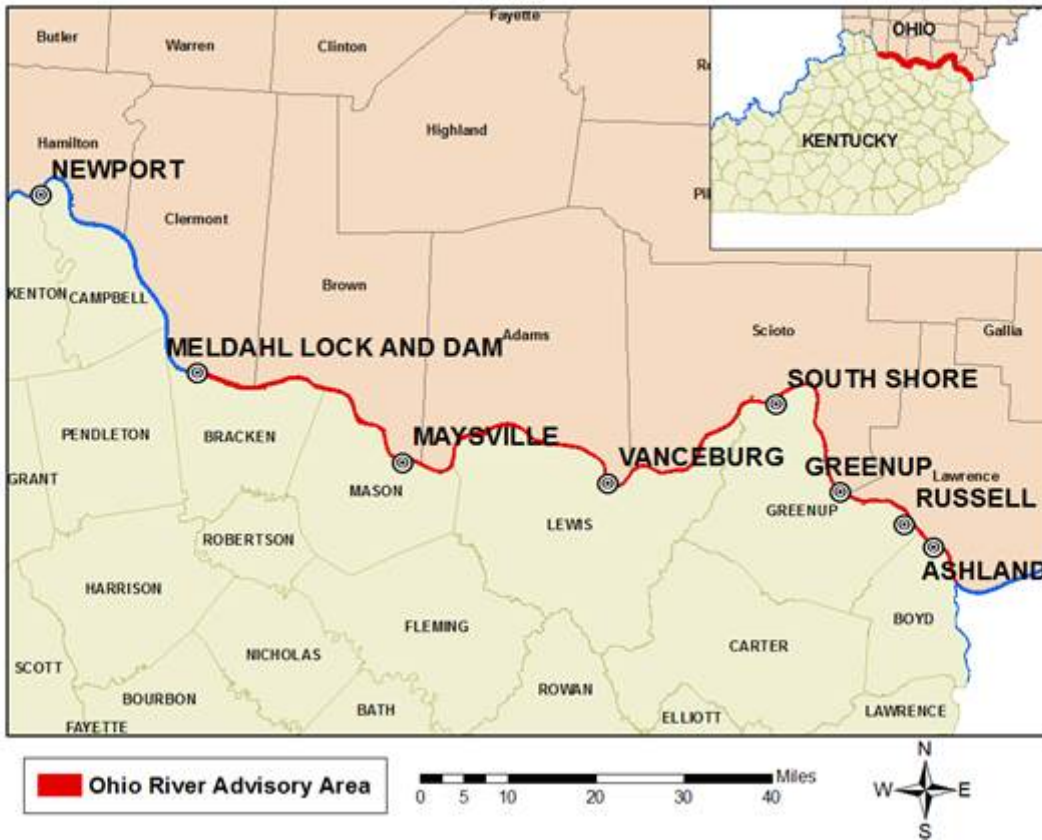
Advisory area stretches from Meldahl Dam to the W. Va. line, Little Sandy River near Greenup, Ky.

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 4, 2015) – The Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW) and the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) have issued a harmful algal bloom (HAB) recreational advisory for the Ohio River, including tributary confluences from Meldahl Dam to the West Virginia state line. This advisory includes the tributary confluences of the Little Sandy River, Tygarts Creek, Kinniconick Creek and Salt Lick Creek.

Water swallowed during recreational activities in this body of water may increase the risk of gastrointestinal symptoms such as stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Skin, eye and throat irritation and/or breathing difficulties may also occur after contact.

On Aug. 31, KDOW received a report of algal blooms on the Ohio River from Ashland to Maysville and at the confluence of the Little Sandy River and the Ohio River.

On Sept. 1, KDOW collected water samples in the Ohio River near Ashland, Ky. to Vanceburg, Ky., including samples at the Maysville, Russell, Ashland and Greenup public water system intakes (including both raw water entering the plant and finished, treated water leaving the plant). Additional samples were taken on Sept. 2 in the Ohio and Little Sandy rivers and at the public water supply intakes. Results from these efforts indicate HAB toxin concentrations at higher levels than those recommended for human contact. In light of these results, KDOW and



KDPH agree that a HAB advisory should be issued because of the current risk for elevated levels of microcystin toxins in the Ohio River and tributaries. The advisory area stretches from Meldahl Dam to the West Virginia line and the lower parts of the Little Sandy River. HABs appear to be particularly concentrated in the tributary confluences to the Ohio River.

There have been no detected microcystin toxins reported in the finished, treated water from these public water systems. These drinking water plants are optimizing their treatment to address the bacteria in the raw water, including using activated carbon to provide additional treatment.

The KDOW will continue to sample and monitor the public water systems' raw water and finished, treated water during the harmful algal bloom. This is a recreation advisory only.

Blue-green algae occur naturally in the environment and are a vital part of the ecosystem. Harmful algal blooms arise when there are excess nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen), sunny conditions, warm

temperatures and low-flow or low-water conditions. The more typical green algae, which do not produce toxins, come in many forms and may appear as underwater moss or stringy mats.

Blue-green algae, on the other hand, appear as slicks of opaque, bright-green paint, but closer inspection often reveals the grainy, sawdust-like appearance of individual colonies or bacteria. The color of the algae may also appear red or brown.

The following guidelines are recommended to avoid exposure to HABs:

- Individuals should avoid direct contact with affected water that has unusual color or where blue-green bacteria have been identified, including swimming, wading, paddling, diving and water skiing.
- People who are prone to respiratory allergies or asthma should avoid areas with HABs. Children may be particularly sensitive.
- If contact has been made with water containing blue-green algae, wash off with fresh water. In some cases, skin irritation will appear after prolonged exposure. If symptoms persist, consult your health care provider.
- If fishing in affected waters, fish fillets (not organs) may be consumed after the fillets have been rinsed in clean, non-lake water.
- Prevent pets and livestock from coming into contact with water where HAB is apparent.

If you are concerned that you have symptoms that are a result of exposure to HABs please see your doctor and call your local health department.

For additional information about this advisory, contact Andrea Keatley at the Kentucky Division of Water at 502-564-3410 or Justin T. Carey, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety, Department for Public Health, at (502) 564-7398. The Little Sandy River remains open to the public. Visitors to the Little Sandy River are advised to be aware of the potential health issues and take precautions.

<http://water.ky.gov/waterquality/pages/HABS.aspx>

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