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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Recreational Public Health Advisory Issued For Ohio River**

*A result of blue-green algae bloom toxins can make people, pets sick*

**Cincinnati, Hamilton County** ----- Local public health officials have issued a recreational public health advisory for the Ohio River as a result of microcystin levels tested in river water samples. Microcystin is a toxic chemical produced by cyanobacteria, often called blue-green algae. Some species of blue-green algae cause harmful algal blooms (HABs) which produce toxins like microcystin, which can make people and pets sick, depending upon the amount and type of exposure.

An advisory means toxin levels exceed the recommended threshold. Swimming or wading is not recommended for the elderly or very young and people with compromised immune systems.

“Signs are being posted at boat ramps warning people that high levels of algal toxins have been detected in the water, and that swimming and wading are not recommended for the very young, the very old and individuals with compromised immune systems,” said Tim Ingram, Hamilton County Health Commissioner.



This photo was taken Friday, September 11, 2015 at K.I.O. Ski Club in North Bend, Ohio.

Greater Cincinnati Water Works has issued a statement that drinking water is safe to drink. Kentucky officials monitoring conditions concur with their counterparts in Ohio that certain groups should avoid recreating in the river at this time.

Multiple state and local organizations including Cincinnati Health Department, Northern Kentucky Health Department, Hamilton County Public Health, Ohio EPA, Greater Cincinnati Water Works Department (GCWW), Kentucky Division of Water, and Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) – are continuously monitoring and analyzing the presence of algae in the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky portion of the Ohio River

Last weekend, health officials urged residents to use caution when swimming or doing other recreational water activities as weather conditions were favorable for HABs to bloom in the Ohio River.

HAB toxins can cause a rash, hives, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain and more severe symptoms at elevated levels of exposure. Seek immediate medical attention if you become sick after recreating on the Ohio River.

Tips to avoid becoming ill from contact with blue-green algae include:

- Avoid water that looks like spilled paint, is discolored or has surface scums, mats or films.
- Bathe or shower with warm, soapy water after being in water that may be contaminated.
- Prevent pets and livestock from coming into contact or swallowing water containing harmful algal blooms.

If you plan to eat fish caught from the Ohio River, remove the guts and liver, and rinse fillets in tap water before eating. Activities near the river such as camping, picnicking, biking and hiking are safe. If you are picnicking, wash your hands before eating if you have had contact with river water or shore debris.

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