

PRESS RELEASE

# Health Advisory

August 16, 2024



Whitman County  
Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Confirmed harmful algal bloom in the Snake River

Questions regarding this information may be directed to Whitman County Public Health at one of the following office locations:

**Colfax Office**

(509) 397-6280

**Pullman Office**

(509) 332-6752

### Alert Categories



#### Health Alert

Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.



#### Health Advisory

Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.



#### Health Update

Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

### Summary

Whitman County Public Health has issued a Health Advisory for the presence of a harmful algal bloom in the Snake River. This is in response to a water sample taken near Granite Point on 8/16/2024 that tested positive for microcystins, a liver toxin. The harmful algal bloom is located intermittently in the stretch of river between Nisqually John Landing and Little Goose Dam.

Additional testing will be performed in the coming weeks to determine the full scope of the harmful algal bloom. Residents and visitors should avoid areas of water with visible green scum on the surface of the water that appears like spilled paint. Sampling results will continue to be updated at [whitmancountypublichealth.org/environmental-health/hazards-and-toxics/algal-blooms](https://whitmancountypublichealth.org/environmental-health/hazards-and-toxics/algal-blooms) throughout the duration of the bloom.

## Requested Actions

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Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Do not drink, swim, wade, use personal watercraft, water ski, or boat in waters where there is a visible bloom.
- Wash your skin and clothing with soap and water if you have contact with algae or discolored or smelly water.
- Keep pets away from the area. Waters where there are harmful algal blooms are not safe for animals. Pets and livestock should have a different source of water when algae blooms are present.
- Do not cook or clean dishes with water contaminated by algae blooms. **Boiling the water will not eliminate the toxins.**
- Do not eat shellfish in waters with algae blooms.

If you see an algal bloom, you can notify the Washington State Department of Ecology at the following link:

<https://www.nwtoxicalgae.org/ReportBloom.aspx>

If you see a fish die-off, you can report them to the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife at the following

link: <https://publicinput.com/Portal/A3502>

Contact your veterinarian if you believe your pet has become ill after consuming or having contact with a harmful algal bloom.

## Additional Information on Harmful Algal Blooms

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Algal blooms are comprised of a type of bacteria common in freshwater environments. A bloom occurs when the 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 include 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, and the presence of these toxins results in an algal bloom being considered harmful. Harmful algal blooms can impact human health and ecosystems, including fish and other aquatic animals.

For additional information on the potential health effects of algal blooms, visit <https://www.nwtoxicalgae.org/>.

If you have other health questions or concerns about harmful algal blooms, please contact Whitman County Public Health or visit our website at [WhitmanCountyPublicHealth.org/environmental-health/hazards-and-toxins/algal-blooms](https://WhitmanCountyPublicHealth.org/environmental-health/hazards-and-toxins/algal-blooms).