



## **Health Alerts Issued For Bluestem Lake And Willow Creek Reservoir**

**For Immediate Release: 7/17/2020**

*Issued jointly from the  
Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health  
Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

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The state has issued health alerts for Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB), also known as toxic blue-green algae, at Bluestem Lake in Lancaster County and Willow Creek Reservoir in Pierce County.

Lakes that continue to be on health alert are Maple Creek Recreation Area Lake in Colfax County and Kirkman's Cove Lake in Richardson County.

Samples taken earlier this week at these lakes were above the health alert threshold of 8 parts-per-billion (ppb) of total microcystin (a toxin released by certain strains of blue-green algae). This is a lower threshold than previous years, based on recommendations issued in 2019 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Previously, the State of Nebraska had set a limit of 20 ppb, but adopted the new limits after concluding that the new EPA threshold is based on the best scientific evidence available, and is protective of public health.

When a health alert is issued, signs are posted to advise the public to use caution, and designated swimming beaches are closed during the alert. Recreational boating and fishing are permitted, but the public is advised to use caution and avoid exposure to the water, particularly avoiding any activity that could lead to swallowing the water. Do not let pets get in the water or drink from the lake. People can still use the public areas for camping, picnics and other outdoor activities.

Weekly sampling has been conducted at 52 public lakes since mid-May. The lakes will continue to be monitored weekly through the end of September. Sampling results for HAB and bacteria will be updated every Friday and posted on NDEE's website, <http://dee.ne.gov>. The state's monitoring is conducted at public lakes with swimming beaches and high public activity. HAB may also be present in other lakes in Nebraska that are not tested, so the public should use caution if they see signs of algal blooms.