



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY UPDATE SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

The Facts

On September 3, 2020 results of three pond water samples collected by the Bare Hill Pond Watershed Committee and analyzed for microcystin (cellular toxic component of cyanobacteria also referred to as blue-green algae) by the University of Connecticut Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering Laboratory were reported. Samples were collected at the following locations: Town Beach, dam, and Thurston's Cove. The only sample result above the detection limit was from Thurston's Cove, with a concentration of 0.083 parts per billion (ppb) microcystin.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) advisory concentrations for cyanobacteria toxins are complicated and can be found at: www.mass.gov/info-details/guidelines-for-cyanobacteria-in-freshwater-recreational-water-bodies#guidelines-for-cyanobacteria-cell-counts.

Under the auspices of the Bare Hill Pond Watershed Committee, a screening sample was collected in late August. A preliminary analysis of that sample indicated a cell count of 80,000 cells/ml. If this were an official sample and analysis, DPH guidance advises that there be no contact with the water body. DPH guidance for lifting a no contact advisory is for samples to be below 70,000 cells/ml collected over 2 consecutive weeks. DPH guidance notes that as cyanobacteria die off, microcystin concentrations can increase because the dead cells release the toxin whereas living cells do not.

The Recommendation

The Board of Health is not lifting or changing the current no contact advisory. The Board, with the endorsement of Logan Bailey of DPH, recommends collection of additional samples next week and not lifting the advisory until levels are below 70,000 cells/ml.

It is encouraging that the most recent data show very low concentrations of microcystin. However, with the potential of an increase in microcystin concentrations with cyanobacteria die off, it is our duty to be protective of public health and continue our no

contact advisory.

Therefore, residents continue to be advised of the following no contact advisory which applies to Bare Hill Pond in its entirety:

- Warning: Avoid Harmful Blue-green Algae Blooms, including while fishing and during boating activities.
- Keep kids and pets away from areas with blooms (greenish discolored water) or scum.
- If contact occurs, rinse skin with clean water. If skin rash or illness occurs, contact a medical provider.
- If removing a boat from the water, wash the boat thoroughly with clean water before transport.

For more information, please see:

www.mass.gov/info-details/harmful-algae-blooms-in-freshwater-bodies
www.harvard.ma.us/board-health

Residents may also sign up for alerts from the Board of Health and the Town Administrator at: www.harvard.ma.us/subscribe