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CPW Advises visitors of toxic blue-green algae in Stagecoach Reservoir



Nestled in the picturesque Yampa Valley near Steamboat Springs, Stagecoach State Park offers a captivating backdrop for recreation. With its expansive 820-acre reservoir offering renowned lake and river fishing, the park is a year-round destination.

OAK CREEK, Colo. – People and their pets are cautioned to avoid contact with water at Stagecoach Reservoir where blue-green algae have accumulated along the shoreline during routine water inspections.

Earlier this week, Morrison Cove was temporarily closed to all body contact due to hazardous levels of algal toxins. Samples taken the week of Sept. 2 indicated hazardous levels of toxins specifically in Morrison Cove with lower levels of toxins found at four other test locations within the reservoir. Another set of samples was taken Monday afternoon and those results came back with lower, non-hazardous levels.

Visitors planning to recreate at Stagecoach are advised to follow the instructions on educational cautionary signs posted around the lake about blue-green algae.

“Algae blooms are common at Stagecoach State Park,” said Craig Preston, Stagecoach State Park Manager. “Because it is an annual event, we installed educational signs several years ago and we test the algae once a week all summer long. Additionally, we send samples to the EPA once a month for further analysis.”

In addition to weekly and monthly testing conducted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District (UYWCD) contracts with a water consulting firm to administer monthly testing in five locations throughout the reservoir from May to November each year.

“Hazardous levels of toxins are rare at Stagecoach,” said Preston. “Low levels are not uncommon late in the season but we have not seen hazardous levels since 2014, the first year we started testing for toxins.”

Although Stagecoach Reservoir has historically had low-risk algal blooms, it is important to note that testing cannot occur at all locations across a reservoir each day. Toxin production from blue-green algae is difficult to predict in both timing and location so it is imperative to be aware when recreating on reservoirs.

Park staff are encouraging visitors to still avoid any activities in the water where algae has accumulated elsewhere around the reservoir. Be especially mindful when walking pets near the reservoir, as blue-green algae can be toxic to pets. Keep your dog leashed at all times. Do not let them drink the water, or lick or ingest dried scum along the shoreline. If accidental exposure does occur, do not let your

pet lick their fur or paws. Rinse them thoroughly with potable water and wear gloves for your own protection if possible.

Contact medical care (doctor or veterinarian) if, after exposure to the water, individuals or pets exhibit nausea, vomiting, digestive distress, breathing problems, seizure, or unexplained illness.

To learn more about blue-green algae, visit [CDPHE's website](#).

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PHOTO OUTLINE:

Image of blue-green algae at Stagecoach State Park.



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