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Department
of Agriculture



NEVADA DIVISION of PUBLIC
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Epidemiology



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Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force Introduces HAB Tracking Tool and Offers Safe Water Recreation Tips

Carson City, NV — As temperatures rise and Nevadans seek relief in the state's lakes, rivers, and reservoirs, the Nevada Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Task Force urges residents and visitors to stay informed about HABs to safely enjoy the state's waterbodies.

In Nevada, cyanobacteria, sometimes referred to as blue-green algae, are naturally present in surface waters and play an important role in aquatic food-webs and biochemical processes. When specific conditions occur, such as high nutrients, warm temperatures, and stagnant water, these organisms can reproduce rapidly, creating a bloom, which can sometimes lead to a HAB. HABs are a growing concern in Nevada due to factors such as nutrient pollution and rising water temperatures.

While not all algae blooms are harmful, some blooms can produce toxins dangerous to humans, animals, and aquatic life and the presence of toxins cannot be identified without testing. Symptoms of exposure can include skin irritation, respiratory issues, gastrointestinal problems, and can be fatal to dogs and other pets. In Nevada, HAB season typically occurs between June and October.

The Nevada HAB Task Force provides the following safety tips to help the public, pets, and other animals stay safe:

- **Check for Advisories:** Before heading out, visit the Office of State Epidemiology [HAB Dashboard](#) to check for any HAB watches, warnings, or dangers.
 - A YELLOW advisory level (HAB WATCH) indicates hazardous conditions are possible or present.
 - An ORANGE advisory level (HAB WARNING) means the condition of the waterbody is unsafe.
 - A RED advisory level (HAB DANGER) indicates the condition of the waterbody is extremely unsafe for human and animal exposure.

- **Learn How to Identify a HAB:** HABs can develop rapidly, move quickly from one location to another, and might not always be covered by a current advisory, so it is important to learn how to recognize them yourself. HABs are often identifiable by a “scum” or discoloration on the water surface. Some types of algae do not produce harmful cyanotoxins, and understanding the difference between the two is helpful when recreating in a water body. HABs can cause water to appear like paint or pea soup, form scum, bubbles, or foam, or look like lettuce or chopped grass. They often have a distinctive smell that can be fishy, rotten, or similar to gasoline. For more information, visit the [NDEP HAB Resource](#) page.
- **Avoid Suspected HABs:** Do not swim or engage in recreational activities in water that appears discolored, has a foul odor, or has visible algal scum. Fishing is safe during algal blooms, but anglers should rinse off their fish with clean water and only eat the fillets.
- **Protect Pets and Children:** Keep pets and children away from water that may be contaminated with HABs, as they are especially vulnerable to algal toxins.
- **Monitor animal water sources:** Keep livestock and other animals away from water sources that may be contaminated by HABs. If animals begin showing signs of illness, contact a veterinarian and inspect water sources.
- **Report Suspicious Blooms:** If you encounter water that you suspect may be affected by HABs, report it to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection Biological Assessment and Monitoring Branch by emailing wfettgather@ndep.nv.gov along with a photo of the suspected HAB, to help with monitoring and response efforts.

The Nevada HAB Task Force is a multi-agency collaboration that began in 2019 and was formalized in 2024. The Task Force brings together experts from cross-disciplinary fields and includes representatives from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Office of State Epidemiology, the Nevada Division of State Parks, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, and the Nevada Department of Agriculture to address the growing challenge of HABs in Nevada. This partnership leverages state-of-the-art satellite imaging, cyanotoxin analysis, and water quality monitoring practices to provide updates on the presence of HABs in Nevada. The Task Force is dedicated to protecting public health, aquatic ecosystems, and recreational resources by ensuring timely detection, effective management, and increased public awareness through the use of cutting-edge science and community engagement. These guiding principles are all part of the [Nevada HAB Strategic Response Plan](#), developed and implemented through the collaborative efforts of the HAB Task Force.

Researchers from the University of Nevada, Reno, are conducting in-depth studies to understand the environmental factors contributing to HABs. Over the next five years, the Task Force plans to expand its monitoring network and enhance its data collection capabilities, as well as secure additional funding and resources to support ongoing research and public outreach initiatives.

Jennifer Carr, Administrator of the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection stated, “This collaboration strengthens our ability to provide a unified statewide approach to detecting, monitoring, and responding to HABs. Research efforts will provide critical insights into the dynamics of HABs, enabling us to further develop effective response strategies to mitigate their impact.”

Melissa Peek-Bullock, State Medical Epidemiologist, stated, “The work of the HAB Task Force and the launch of the new HAB dashboard underscores our commitment to safeguarding Nevada’s public health. By leveraging advanced monitoring technologies and fostering collaboration, we are better equipped to address the challenges posed by harmful algal blooms.”

Bob Mergell, Administrator of Nevada State Parks, added, “Nevada is fortunate to have exceptional water-based recreation opportunities across the State. I appreciate the Nevada HAB Task Force’s dedication to ensuring that our visitors are well-informed about the potential risks of harmful algal blooms and know how to stay safe during their visit.”

For more information about the health effects of HABs, visit the [Office of State Epidemiology Harmful Algal Bloom](https://nvose.org/programs/environmental-health/harmful-algal-blooms-eh/) page (https://nvose.org/programs/environmental-health/harmful-algal-blooms-eh/)

For more information about HAB monitoring, sampling, and to join the HAB Listserv, visit the [NDEP HAB Resource](https://ndep.nv.gov/water/rivers-streams-lakes/water-quality-monitoring/harmful-algal-bloom-program/hab-resources) page (https://ndep.nv.gov/water/rivers-streams-lakes/water-quality-monitoring/harmful-algal-bloom-program/hab-resources)

To view real-time information about published HAB advisories in Nevada, visit the [HAB Dashboard](https://nvose.org/programs/environmental-health/harmful-algal-blooms-eh/) (https://nvose.org/programs/environmental-health/harmful-algal-blooms-eh/) scroll to the bottom of the page for the link to the dashboard.