

Great Sand Lakes Association

Protocols for Potential and Actual Cyanobacterial Blooms and eColi Beach Closures

Approved by the GSLA Board of Directors 8/25/2023

Introduction

As the cyanobacterial blooms have become more common and the public becomes more aware of the issue, the Great Sand Lakes Association (GSLA), as beach managers, needs to be ready to respond to reporting by the Association to Protect Cape Cod (APCC) and to our own observations.

The Barnstable County Health Department and the Cape Cod Commission have recently joined with APCC in working on protocols for testing and notification. The GSLA Water Quality Committee has worked to include their processes in ours.

This protocol describes the GSLA's response to various situations where water quality may be suspect. The intent is to inform beach goers of our swimming ponds current status so they can make informed personal decisions on whether to go into the water or not. Since the GSLA does not have lifeguards or other staff to communicate water conditions, permanent and temporary signs will be posted with content, color, locations and number of signs used to indicate the severity of any risk that has been identified.

Note: Beaches will be closed to ***water related activities only*** when we are directed to do so by the Harwich Board of Health.

Signage

Formatting:

In order to catch users attention, size color will be used both in the title and the sign border to indicate severity.

In order to improve readability for those passing by, the 18 point minimum font sizes will be used and QR codes will be at least 2"x2"

Scenario 1: APCC does their bi-weekly test that puts a given pond in the "Potential for Concern" category.

Signs will be printed and laminated on white paper and put up at all entrances of GSLA owned beaches on that specific pond.

Title: 24 point ,black, mixed case, thin black border

Scenario 2: When a bloom has been observed and a **sample has been taken but not yet analyzed.**

"Advisory" signs will be put up at all entrances of GSLA owned beaches on that specific pond.

Note: Reported but not sampled blooms will not have any signs placed on beaches.

Signs will be printed and laminated on white paper and put up at all entrances of GSLA owned beaches on that specific pond.

Title: 28 point, yellow on blue background, mixed case, yellow border

Scenario 3: APCC has conducted an evaluation of a water sample that puts it above the Massachusetts allowable standards for cyanobacteria. APCC recommends "use restriction" but the Harwich Board of Health has not required a beach closure.

Sign will be printed and laminated on white paper and will be put up at all beach entrances and on removable sign posts every 50' near the water.

Title: 48 point, white on red background, all caps, red border

Scenario 4: Harwich Health Department closes our beaches to water based activities due to negative E.coli tests **or cyanobacteria blooms.**

A temporary "Beach Closed" sticker, provided by the Board of Health, will be applied to the existing Water Quality sign on the impacted beach. This is a requirement of our beach permit from the town.

Sign will be printed and laminated on white paper and will be put up at all beach entrances and on removable sign posts every 25' near the water. An email blast will go to all residents explaining the beach closure.

Notice

The APCC* has observed cyanobacteria colonies in this pond. According to APCC, this is a “potential for concern” because the existence of cyanobacteria colonies can lead to cyanobacteria blooms. Blooms can be benign or toxic and, if toxic, pose a danger to young children and pets. Further monitoring will be conducted.

If you are not sure what a cyanobacteria bloom looks like, go to **<https://gsla-harwich.org/cyanopics>** to be redirected to images on the APCC web site or click this QR code with your smartphone camera.



If you see a bloom, please call Dave Callaghan immediately at 508-397-4808. If direct contact cannot be made, please try to reach Ann Frechette at 617-504-6539. If neither is available, take a picture of the bloom and email it, along with date, time and location of the observation to dave_callaghan@hotmail.com.

*Association to Preserve Cape Cod
<https://apcc.org/>

Advisory

A suspicious algal bloom was observed on this pond and a sample has been taken for analysis. We do not know if this is a toxic cyanobacteria bloom, and test results may take several days. Given that cyanobacteria can be toxic, the bloom may pose a risk, especially for children and pets. These signs will be updated or removed as soon as we get confirmation of the test results.

If in doubt, stay out.

Go to <https://gsla-harwich.org/resources/water-quality> for more information about cyanobacteria or click this QR code with your smartphone camera.



If you have questions, please contact Dave Callaghan at 508-397-4808 or Ann Frechette at 617-504-6539.

WARNING

Cyanobacteria monitoring of this pond by the APCC* has found toxic cyanobacteria at or above Massachusetts standards. This means that health risks are especially high for children and pets.

If in doubt, stay out.

Go to <https://gsla-harwich.org/resources/water-quality> for more information about cyanobacteria or click this QR code with your smartphone camera.



If you have questions, please contact Dave Callaghan at 508-397-4808 or Ann Frechette at 617-504-6539.

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NO SWIMMING

The Harwich Board of Health has determined that due to elevated bacterial levels, this beach is presently unsafe for swimming and may cause illness in people and pets.

**You may continue to use the beach but
DO NOT go near the water.**

Daily testing is being conducted and these signs will be removed when conditions return to a safe level.