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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 9, 2009

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Toxic Algae Health Advisory Issued for Kitsap Lake

BREMERTON, WA --- The Health District today issued a public health advisory for residents and visitors of Kitsap Lake (west of Bremerton) due to the presence of a highly toxic blue-green algae bloom. Preliminary analysis of a sample of the blue-green algae collected on October 6th, 2009, revealed that the bloom is producing very high levels of microcystin toxins which, if ingested in sufficient quantities, can make people sick, and can kill fish, waterfowl, pets and livestock.

Warning signs have been posted at community access areas around the lake. The Health District will be conducting additional weekly toxicity testing until the bloom subsides.

During the advisory, lake area residents and visitors are advised to:

- Avoid ingesting lake water. If a resident draws lake water for drinking purposes, they are encouraged to drink bottled water until further notice.
- Avoid swimming and other water contact sports (especially in areas where the algae are concentrated).
- Limit access of pets and livestock to the lake.
- Do not consume fish caught during the algae bloom.
- Rinse boats and trailers before going to another lake.

Area residents are also advised to contact the Kitsap County Health District (360) 337-5235 if any one of the following conditions is observed:

- Large numbers of dead fish in the lake.
- Sudden or unexplained sickness or death of a pet cat or dog.
- If someone has entered the water and experiences skin rash, dizziness or weakness, respiratory allergy, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or vomiting.

Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, reproduce rapidly in fresh water when the amount of sunlight, temperature and nutrients are adequate. Within a few days, a “clear” lake can become cloudy and discolored with algae growth. This is called a “bloom”. Blue-green algae usually float to the surface and can be several inches thick near the shoreline. Usually these blooms look like bright green paint floating on the surface of the water. When they die off, the algae may turn blue, white or brown.

Lake shoreline residents are encouraged to look for blue-green algae blooms in local lakes and call the Kitsap County Health District when blooms are observed. To report a waterborne illness, an algae bloom, a case of swimmer’s itch, or if you have any questions regarding the Health District’s lake monitoring program, please call the District at (360) 337-5235. Information about current swimming beach closures is also available on the Health District’s telephone hotline at 1-800-2BE-WELL (1-800-223-9355), or online at www.kitsapcountyhealth.com.

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