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## **DEC Encourages New Yorkers to Learn About Harmful Algal Blooms as Warm Weather Starts**

### ***DEC Releases New Brochure to Help Residents Detect, Avoid, and Report HABs***

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today encouraged New Yorkers to learn about Harmful Algal Blooms, or “HABs,” as DEC’s 2017 HABs notification season starts on May 26, and the weather becomes warmer.

To help educate the public about HABs, also known as blue green algae, DEC released a new brochure explaining how to detect, avoid and report HABs, as well as the health risks of HABs. “Harmful algal blooms, commonly known as HABs, impact many of New York’s lakes,” **said Commissioner Basil Seggos**. “DEC is working to help New Yorkers better understand how to identify and report a bloom, as well as how to keep themselves and their families and pets safe. We’re also working with localities to safeguard water supplies across the state.”

Most algae are harmless, but exposure to toxins and other substances from harmful algal blooms can make people and animals sick. HABs can impact drinking water and recreation, and cause unpleasant odors.

“With warmer weather comes the need for increased vigilance in detecting harmful algal blooms that have the potential to invade our lakes and compromise their use for drinking and recreational purposes,” **said Health Commissioner Howard Zucker**. “These new resources complement existing information designed to further educate New Yorkers about algal blooms and expand New York’s aggressive efforts to safeguard public health.”

HABs vary in appearance from scattered green dots in the water, to long, linear green streaks, pea soup or spilled green paint, to blue-green or white coloration. People, pets and livestock should avoid contact with water that is discolored or has algal scums on the surface. If a bloom is present, do not use the water and inform the DEC HABs Program at [HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:HABsInfo@dec.ny.gov). Any symptoms or health concerns related to HABs should be reported to the NYS Department of Health at [harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov](mailto:harmfulalgae@health.ny.gov).

HABs have been detected in nearly 300 water bodies since 2012. To address HABs, DEC works with the NYS Department of Health, NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and other state and local partners.

**(MORE)**

While the exact cause of HABs is not fully understood, blooms occur most often in waters high in phosphorus and/or nitrogen. New York State has many programs and activities to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen from entering the water from surrounding lands, including stormwater permitting programs, funding for water quality improvement projects, and a nutrient law that restricts the use of phosphorus lawn fertilizer.

DEC has also released a new Program Guide that details how the DEC HABs Program works with partners to identify, track and report HABs throughout the state, and communicate health risks to the public.

For more information about HABs, including bloom notifications, which are updated each week during the summer and fall, visit DEC's [Harmful Algal Blooms \(HABs\)](#) web page. The HABs [brochure and program guide](#), which includes information and links to resources regarding bloom prevention, management, and control, can also be downloaded from the DEC website. Click [here](#) for information on Department of Health HAB guidelines, "Know, Avoid, Report".

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