



Media Release

Friday, 6th March, 2009

LAKE TREVALLYN ALGAL BLOOM THREAT NOT OVER

A cooler summer and increased water flows are thought to have so far prevented an algal outbreak at Lake Trevallyn this year, but experts warn the threat is not over yet.

Algal blooms have occurred in Lake Trevallyn over the last three years with blue green algae (*Anabaena circinalis*) cells being present in very high numbers.

In the 2007/2008 summer season, residents were advised not to use the lake and some sporting events were cancelled due to the potential harm to human health arising from contact with algae.

The Scientific and Technical Officer for NRM North's Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program, Michael Attard, said while it was predicted the algal blooms would reoccur this summer, so far the threat has remained at bay.

"Low water flows, high water temperatures and high nutrient concentrations are attributed to triggering algal blooms.

"This summer hasn't been as hot as last year so the surface water temperatures at Lake Trevallyn have remained relatively cool and water flows in the catchment have also been higher than the previous two years." Mr Attard said.

To ensure the public is kept informed on the algal bloom situation, a new daily report will be published in the Examiner newspaper from today.

The report can be found in the services section on the weather page.

It will give an update on the blue green algae status by showing either: no current algal warning or a current algal warning with a risk description.

In the event of a bloom, signage will also be erected at the lake advising on the associated health risks.

NRM North's Chief Executive Officer, James McKee, said the new report would be a convenient way for the public to check the health of the lake.

"While we aim to keep the information as up-to-date as possible, there will inevitably be some lag time between taking the samples and analysing the results.

"We encourage the public to let us know if they see algae in the lake or can smell a pungent odour." Mr McKee said.

Water samples are taken from seven sites at the lake every week, testing for Blue Green Algae, Temperature, Dissolved Oxygen, ph, Turbidity, Salinity, chlorophyll a, Nutrients and Bacteria.

The monitoring is the result of a partnership between NRM North, Esk Water, West Tamar Council, Meander Valley Council, Launceston City Council, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of the Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts and Hydro Tasmania.

The group is also trying to identify the key drivers causing the bloom.

Algal ecologist, Dr Malcolm McCausland, from Hydro Tasmania Consulting, warned the potential still exists for a blue green algal bloom to occur.

“Unlike last summer, there has been less prolonged surface warming, a condition most suitable for the growth of *Anabaena*.

“However with *Anabaena* already present in Lake Trevallyn in very low numbers, the potential exists for a bloom to occur until mid April when favourable growth conditions are still possible.” Dr McCausland said.

Ends:

For more information contact:

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***** PICTURE/INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY:** James McKee and Michael Attard from NRM North are available for interview at the boat ramp at Lake Trevallyn **TODAY at 11.30am**. Experts will be on site taking water samples and there will be an opportunity for photographers/cameramen to go out on a boat to get shots of water testing at different locations in the lake.

Directions to Lake Trevallyn boat ramp – drive up Reatta Road, turn right onto Lake Trevallyn Road and follow the road until you reach boat ramp.

Background information on Blue Green algae blooms:

Blue green algae blooms can cause problems with unsightly appearance and sometimes a pungent smell to the water.

They can make affected waters unappealing for recreational activities such as boating, swimming or fishing.

Contact with blue green algae including *Anabaena circinalis* can cause numerous health problems such as skin, eye and ear irritations and respiratory infections.

Lake Trevallyn is also used as a drinking water supply. The water treatment plants which treat the Lake Trevallyn water are able to remove the algal cells thereby ensuring the drinking water is safe.

While some populations of this species can be toxic, the Lake Trevallyn population was found to be non toxic.