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News Release

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Extra caution urged for swimmers, due to Blue Green Algae

An Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recommendation to temporarily avoid body contact with water at Bernice State Park is prompting the Grand River Dam Authority to remind lake enthusiasts to take extra precaution on Grand Lake this summer. The state park is putting up signage to notify the public.

DEQ made the recommendation after the GRDA Ecosystems Management's water lab confirmed blue green algae (BGA) was in the waters near the park, and in portions of Horse Creek and the back of Duck Creek.

BGA are microscopic organisms that are naturally present in lakes and streams, usually in low numbers. However, the algae can become abundant in shallow, warm water that receives heavy sunlight. While most BGA are not toxic, toxins can be produced in some algae blooms. Results of the tests of BGA water samples taken by the GRDA Ecosystems Management Department will not be available until early next week. However, as a precaution DEQ made its recommendation to avoid body contact.

GRDA joins with the DEQ in urging lake users to practice caution and use common sense when visiting the areas of the lake where BGA may be present.

"In the interest of public safety, we are just asking lake users to be careful and vigilant," said GRDA Corporate Communications Director Justin Alberty. "Our ecosystems department's monitoring efforts are ongoing, but we ask for the public's help in that regard. If you see areas of the lake where you believe BGA is present, please contact GRDA."

According to information from a DEQ fact sheet, BGA may look like thick pea soup, green paint, or bluish, brownish, or reddish-green paint. When it washes up on shore, it may appear to look like a thick green mat. BGA are made up of extremely small organisms that are difficult to pick up and hold. Consumption or inhalation of BGA can be unsafe. Green algae are stringy and made up of grass-green strands. These green algae are harmless.

If you have suspicions of other possible outbreaks on Grand Lake, the public can contact the GRDA Ecosystems Department at (918) 256 0723 or jjaggars@grda.com. Residents can also contact the Department of Environmental Quality at 1-800-522-0206.

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