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MARTIN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

May 27, 2010

BACTERIA ADVISORY IN ST. LUCIE RIVER AND BLUE GREEN ALGAE DISCOVERED IN THE NORTH FORK OF THE ST. LUCIE RIVER

The Martin County Health Department is recommending residents avoid contact with the water near the Roosevelt Bridge after additional testing revealed enteric bacteria at higher than normal levels. The five week geometric mean, which is a type of average used for this type of sampling, continues to exceed the federal standard. Potential health risks for those who ingest or come in contact with the water include upset stomach, diarrhea, eye irritation and skin rashes.

Enteric bacteria inhabit the intestinal tract of humans and animals and their presence in recreational waters is an indication of fecal pollution. The presence of these bacteria may come from storm water runoff, pets, wildlife and human sewage.

The Martin County Health Department will continue to test every Monday. The advisory will continue until there is at least two weeks of good samples. In addition, we will monitor the geometric mean for at least two weeks of good results.

The St. Lucie and Martin County Health Departments are issuing a warning to avoid contact with the St. Lucie River near the Ballantrae Golf Club after tests confirmed blue green algae in that area. Residents are also warned to avoid any areas of the river with visible algae growth.

The type of algae found, *Microcystis aeruginosa*, also known as cyanobacteria, can release a toxin that is harmful to humans and pets. Further testing is currently being conducted to determine if the toxin was present.

Contact with water containing the algae can cause skin irritation and hay fever-like symptoms. Residents should also take precautions to prevent their dogs from wading in or drinking the water in that area.

Blue green algae are commonly found in fresh water ponds and rivers in Florida. Sunlight, temperature and water's nutrients play a role in causing the algae to multiply.

Residents are asked to call Mary Murphy at the Department of Environmental Protection at (772)-398-2806, if they observe blue green algae in their community.

For more information: www.myfloridaeh.com/medicine/aquatic/cyanobacteria.htm