

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

Harmful Algal Bloom Persists in Fort Pond

By Cecelia H. Scheuer

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A harmful blue-green algal, or cyanobacteria, bloom continues to affect Fort Pond, according to Concerned Citizens of Montauk's water testing results for the week of July 29. While toxin levels remain low, C.C.O.M. has again urged people to avoid contact with the water until further notice.

Those who do come in contact with the water are advised to rinse immediately with clean water and seek medical attention if they experience nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; skin, eye, or throat irritation, or allergic reactions or breathing difficulties after contact.

C.C.O.M. monitors Fort Pond for blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, in partnership with the Goble Lab at Stony Brook Southampton, collecting samples each week that are then sent to the lab for testing. This week's tests showed no blue-green algal bloom in Big Reed Pond, although samples taken at the Industrial Road and boat ramp sides of Fort Pond showed a persistent bloom at both locations.

C.C.O.M. also tests water bodies in Montauk, Amagansett, East Hampton, and Springs for the bacteria enterococcus, sharing the results on the Surfrider Foundation's Blue Water Task Force online. Enterococcus levels are often elevated, posing a risk to human health, following "heavy rains, extreme high tides, or warm water temperatures," Kate Rossi-Snook, an environmental advocate for C.C.O.M., explained. This week, "enterococcus bacteria levels at many sites, including the ocean beaches, have been restored to safe levels, however after the week of dry, hot weather certain problematic areas remain. . . ." These include East Creek on Lake Montauk, Pussy's Pond in Springs, and the Head of the Harbor at Three Mile Harbor.

Of the 32 sites tested this week, 9 showed high enterococcus levels, a significant improvement from last week's 19. East Creek at Lake Montauk showed the highest bacteria levels -- 2,987, nearly 28 times the E.P.A.'s public health threshold (enterococcus levels at 104 and above are considered a risk to human health). The next highest level -- 1,081 -- was recorded at the sampling site at Pussy's Pond. High levels were also found in Springs at Louse Point Beach in Accabonac Harbor, as well as at the Folkstone Drive and the Head of Harbor sampling sites on Three Mile Harbor.

The remaining high bacteria levels were recorded at the Surfside Place outfall pipe in Montauk, Fresh Pond Creek in Amagansett, and at the culvert end of Northwest Creek and the Methodist Lane swale sampling sites in East Hampton.

In Montauk, this week's results indicated medium enterococcus levels at the nature preserve beach and West Creek testing sites at Lake Montauk, as well as the ramp at Fort Pond.

In East Hampton, medium bacteria were recorded at the beach side of Georgica Pond and the ramp at Northwest Creek. Sampling at Fresh Pond Beach in Amagansett also showed medium bacteria levels, as did that done at the Shipyard Lane ramp at Accabonac Harbor.

CCOM will continue its testing weekly through the summer.