

Reservoir algae toxic

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HARWICH – Don't let your dogs drink from the West Reservoir in West Harwich, harbor master Tom Leach warned this week.

The shores of the reservoir, part of the Herring River, are blooming with an algae that can kill animals.

Neighbors also may smell a putrid odor and see growing discoloration at the reservoir, which holds water to flood nearby cranberry bogs.

No human deaths have been directly associated with such toxins, but they may cause skin irritations or nausea, according to a Web site on algae.

The algae bloom has grown in size since it was reported Monday and is expected to continue growing until the algae exhausts available nutrients and starts to die off.

A similar bloom of the same blue-green algae was found on the reservoir in 1996 and 2001. Similar warnings were posted about toxic algae blooms in Walkers Pond in Brewster in 2000.

These blooms are abundant in ponds containing much organic matter during summer.

They resemble a string of beads with larger empty cells scattered along the filament, according to the harbor master's press release, the second issued this week.