

## **Welcome back!**

The temperatures are (finally!) warming up in the Cayuga Lake watershed! As enjoyable as this weather is, it unfortunately means that the harmful algal bloom (HAB) season is approaching. With this in mind, we would like to remind everyone what a harmful algal bloom is, how to tell if a bloom is a HAB, and what to do if you see one on the lake!

## **What is a harmful algal bloom (HAB)?**

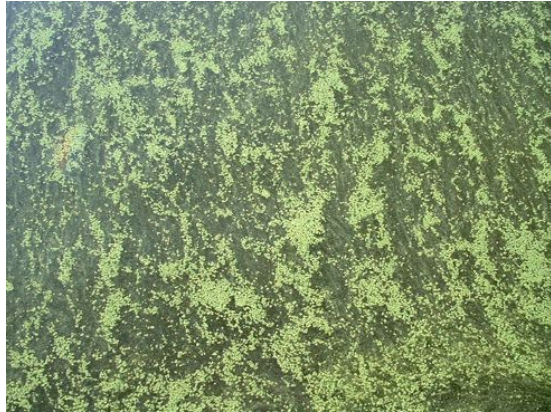
Although cyanobacteria are commonly referred to as harmful algae or blue-green algae, they are not really algae, they are bacteria. Under the right conditions, populations of cyanobacteria can grow quite rapidly forming what are known as harmful algal blooms (HABs).

Cyanobacteria blooms (HABs) are likely to produce a range of natural chemical compounds, many of which are toxic to humans and pets. These toxins, termed cyanotoxins, can cause health concerns if touched, ingested, or inhaled. Likewise, the increasing presence of HABs on Cayuga Lake poses a threat to those who use the lake for drinking water and may hinder any recreation activities from occurring. HABs are not to be confused with excessive algal growth that is a common occurrence in freshwater lakes and ponds which can sometimes be referred to as an algal bloom. This excessive algal growth generally does have negative implications for the surrounding ecosystem, however it is not known to be toxic to humans.

## **How do I tell if a bloom is a HAB?**

HABs have been described as having the appearance spilled green paint or pea soup. They can also look like parallel streaks in the water or like green dots. Non-toxic algae tends to look more like floating mats or hairy, as if green tumbleweed was submerged in the water. Below are some examples to help identify toxic cyanobacteria blooms (HABs).

Examples of HABs:



Examples of excessive growth of common algae::





If you see a suspicious HAB, take precautions and *stay away*.

### **What do I do if I see a HAB on the lake?**

Avoid it and report it! If you think you've spotted a harmful algal bloom, notify us at [habshotline@gmail.com](mailto:habshotline@gmail.com). In your email, be sure to include *pictures* of the bloom, its *location*, and the *date and time* it was observed.

### **Check the beach for HABs before you go!**

You can find the most up to date information on water quality by calling the park office ahead of your trip.

[Taughannock Falls State Park](#)

(607) 387-6739

[Cayuga Lake State Park](#)

(315) 568-5163

[Long Point State Park](#)

(315) 364- 5637 for (315) 497-0130

[Lansing Myers Park](#)

(607) 533-7388 ext. 17

Information about reported HABs can also be found on the DEC's new online map and reporting system [here](#). This interactive map allows you to view locations of freshwater HABs sightings across New York state, and is mobile friendly!

Additionally, a new HABs database is in the works for the Community Science Institute (CSI) website! So stay tuned! More information on that to follow in future HABs newsletters.

*If you have any questions regarding HABs in Cayuga Lake, please send them to [habsintern@gmail.com](mailto:habsintern@gmail.com) with the subject line HABs Q&A to be featured in an upcoming newsletter!*

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The Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program is a collaborative effort led by a local consortium of three nonprofits: The Community Science Institute (CSI), the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN), and Discover Cayuga Lake (DCL), working in collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the State University of New York Environmental School of Forestry (SUNY-ESF).

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