June 19, 2020

BEACH CONDITIONS TO JUNE 18

Water quality testing by Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development has shown that levels of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) were within recreational water quality objectives at most beaches monitored this week.

*Escherichia coli* counts were briefly above the recreational water quality objective at Plum Coulee and St. Malo beach on June 16, but quickly returned below the objective by June 18.

Bathers are advised to avoid swallowing lake water, wash hands before handling food, and avoid swimming with an open cut or wound, or while experiencing illness. On Lake Winnipeg, bathers should minimize water contact if lake levels are high and strong winds are blowing from the north. Research shows *E. coli* counts tend to be elevated during these conditions as they are washed out of the wet beach sand and into the bathing area.

An algal bloom was sampled this week at Stephenfield Reservoir beach. The number of blue-green algae cells was above Manitoba’s recreational water quality objective, while the concentration of algal toxin microcystin was below the recreational water quality objective. First level algae advisory signs were posted at Stephenfield Reservoir beach this week.

Algal blooms are difficult to predict and may form and then disperse quickly or last for several days or weeks. Warm and calm weather coupled with relatively high nutrient loads provide ideal conditions for blue-green algae to develop. People are reminded to avoid swimming in water where severe algal blooms are visible and to prevent pets from drinking water along the shoreline where algal blooms are present. Home and cottage owners who use lake water as a source for drinking water should be aware that most small treatment systems are unable to remove algal toxins. Therefore, where blue-green algal blooms are present, avoid drinking the water or using it for other domestic purposes.

Information on beach water quality results, advisory signs posted at beaches and swimmer and water safety is available at: manitoba.ca/beaches.