



Official: Stick to supervised lakes

Few concerned that Banook tests took so long, but advise against taking dips in untested water

By JOHN GILLIS Health Reporter

Thu. Sep 4 - 7:13 AM

Swimmers should stick to supervised lakes around Halifax Regional Municipality to be assured about both water quality and safety, a public health official says.

The city issued a swimming advisory Tuesday saying Lake Banook, Penhorn Lake and Oathill Lake had tested positive for high levels of fecal coliform bacteria almost three weeks earlier, on Aug. 13. None of the beaches are supervised by lifeguards during the summer.

Linda Young, director of public health for the Capital district health authority, said she wasn't concerned about the length of time it took for the high fecal coliform counts to be published since the city makes it clear that only lakes with supervised beaches are routinely tested for water safety.

"There's all kinds of issues around unsupervised areas that go beyond water quality," she said Wednesday.

Ms. Young said the authority's public health service has had no calls from the public about illnesses related to swimming in any water in Halifax Regional Municipality.

She advised people who choose to swim in unsupervised areas to avoid swallowing the water. But the bottom line is, you should swim in supervised areas. "Then you know the water's been tested, plus clearly you have a lifeguard there," Ms. Young said.

Between the day the test was done and Tuesday, when a news release warned of high fecal coliform levels, Canada's top paddlers descended on Lake Banook for the Canadian sprint canoe-kayak championships.

An official with the Mic Mac Amateur Aquatic Club, based on Lake Banook, said an event of that size would not likely have been cancelled based on the test result, but it would have been nice for athletes to know about the bacteria, which can cause diarrhea and abdominal pain.

The city tests the water quality of a limited number of unsupervised lakes for ecological reasons on a seasonal basis only, Tuesday's release said. Those results have always been posted on the city website (the most recent are from the spring tests), but prior to this year staff didn't issue news releases even when those tests found high bacteria levels in unsupervised lakes.

Shalom Mandaville, who lives on Maynard Lake in Dartmouth, has lobbied the city to provide more information on the water quality in all the lakes around Halifax Regional Municipality.

Mr. Mandaville, who is scientific director of the Soil and Water Conservation Society of Metro Halifax, said he appreciated that it takes time to analyze samples.

He welcomed the notifications about fecal coliform levels but said those tests don't really say much about

"I hate to say this, but their testing is kindergarten stuff," he said of the city's seasonal program.

The tests don't look at the insects and mollusks that develop in the sediment of lakes and can indicate the health of water systems.

"They're like the canary in the coal mine," he said of the tiny animals.

The pollution that affects the insects and mollusks can create conditions favourable to the growth of algae that can be toxic to humans when present in large concentrations.

(jgillis@herald.ca)

MULTIMEDIA CENTRE

TOP VIDEO



PLAY VIDEO >

N.S. service remembers Swissair victims

TOP VIDEO



PLAY VIDEO >

Canadian troops help Kandahar kids with school supplies

TOP SLIDESHOW



PLAY SLIDE >

Pictures of the Week Aug. 22-29

ADVERTISEMENT

Save Our Water,
Save the Planet.

Visit:



Start Saving Water Now!

www.nuprana.com Ads by Google

TODAY'S METRO STORIES

Anybody want a big, free house?
 Official: Stick to supervised lakes
 Three declare for school board
 Alleged fraudster caught on the phone
 Woman charged with armed robbery
 METRO IN BRIEF

[Back to Metro Section](#)