



Summer Village of Grandview

P.O. Box 100 (605 - 2nd Avenue)
Ma-Me-O Beach, Alberta T0C 1X0
Phone: (780) 586-2494 Fax: (780) 586-3567
Email: Information@svofficepl.com
Website: www.grandview.ca

July 22, 2014

Jennifer Graydon
Environmental Health Scientist
Health Protection Branch
Alberta Health

Jessica Popadynetz
Alberta Health Services

Via email

Dear Jennifer and Jessica,

Re: Pigeon Lake Cyanobacteria Advisories

The process and subsequent misrepresentation for the issuance of health advisories concerning algae blooms for Pigeon Lake is having a serious effect on the reputation of Pigeon Lake as a place to recreate and enjoy a beautiful lake.

Under the present system, as I understand it, Alberta Health Services, under the direction of Alberta Health, routinely tests the water for cyanobacteria and, if specified guidelines are exceeded, issues a health advisory. This advisory is then published in the local press to inform the public.

While this process would seem logical and efficient, experience from the past several years has shown that it is failing miserably. Every time an advisory is issued, the *Edmonton Journal* publishes a file photograph of an algae bloom from 2006, a time when our lake was severely stressed following a 10-year drought. The photo appears to be colour enhanced.

To make matters worse, the *Journal* incorrectly tags the photo as representing a 2013 bloom. This past weekend, the *Journal* used the same photo to illustrate an advisory issued for Wizard Lake. These misrepresentations have occurred even after I advised the author of one of the articles of the mistake.

As a result, Albertans are getting a falsely negative impression of the condition of Pigeon Lake. In fact, algae blooms in recent years have been minimal and have posed very little impediment to the enjoyment of water activities. In my view, the *Journal's* use of legitimate public health notices to fuel sensationalistic news stories undermines the credibility of **your** agency.

I am formally asking that Alberta Health Services publish an editorial in the *Edmonton Journal* to clarify that the water quality in Pigeon Lake is not as represented by the mislabeled photographs repeatedly published in the *Edmonton Journal* and to request that the *Journal* cease and desist from publishing misleading information in association with Alberta Health Services public notices.

Further, I would appreciate it if Alberta Health Services would explain that algal blooms are a common occurrence in prairie lakes and that paleolimnology studies have shown that these blooms have existed at Pigeon Lake for a very long time.

Further consideration should also be given to the entire process of issuing health advisories for a naturally occurring phenomenon. An advisory is interpreted as a warning of dire consequences, and the issuance of these advisories is having severe unintended consequences on property values and

Grandview – committed to watershed stewardship

the overall enjoyment of the lake by Albertans. There is no record of anyone ever having died from an algae bloom in Alberta. AHS might do better to concentrate on far more dangerous issues such as boating safety or the failure to use sun screen. Driving to the lake is statistically far greater health risk than blue green algae. Time and resources spent on traffic safety might save some lives. By comparison, scaring the public with health advisories over a relatively harmless natural occurrence seems unproductive. These advisories, based on a localized measurement of cyanobacteria, effectively shut down the lake for the season.

I understand that at the end of this year Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services will be re-evaluating the protocol for the issuance of advisories. I would appreciate an opportunity to provide some recommendations at that time for your consideration.

In the meantime, your immediate efforts to clarify this situation and to prevent the media from continuing to present distorted information to the public would be much appreciated. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

Don Davidson, Mayor
Summer Village of Grandview,
Pigeon Lake

Cc: Editor, Edmonton Journal
Chairman, Alliance of Pigeon Lake Municipalities
Hon. Diana McQueen, MLA Drayton Valley-Devon
Sylvia Roy, CAO, Summer Village of Grandview
Pigeon Lake Watershed Association

1. Original article from Edmonton Journal – August, 2006.

Algae explosion hits lakes

Overheated waters laced with chemical fertilizer, manure and sewage create perfect conditions for toxic blooms

Hanneke Brooymans, The Edmonton Journal

Published: Saturday, August 05 2006

Research shows algal blooms have, to varying degrees, been around in Alberta for centuries, said Rolf Vinebrooke, associate professor in the University of Alberta's Freshwater Biodiversity Laboratory. But they could become more frequent and intense if the province's climate continues to warm, he said. Warmer temperatures make the algae more efficient at grabbing nitrogen from the atmosphere, something which limits their growth otherwise, Vinebrooke said.

hbrooymans@thejournal.canwest.com

BE AWARE

 **Email to a friend**

 **Printer friendly**

Font: 

 **BOOKMARK** 

Albertans are "bear aware" when they venture into the mountain parks and they should develop the same smarts when it comes to algae, said Ron Zurawell, an Alberta Environment limnologist and water-quality specialist. Algal blooms can produce liver and neurotoxins that can be deadly if swallowed.

Zurawell offers the following advice:

- If you see an algal bloom or visible scum in a lake within one metre of the surface, stay out of that water. Even non-toxic varieties could produce rashes and hives. Keep your pets out of the water, too, and make sure they don't drink any lake water.
- Wait two weeks after the bloom disappears before you enter the water. It can take this long for the toxins to break down.

© The Edmonton Journal 2006

2. Edmonton Journal – Liver toxins high in Alberta Lakes August 15, 2012 by Bob Weber. This article shows the algae bloom in August 2006. Photograph by Brian Gavrilloff, Edmonton Journal.com. The article is not in the archives.

3. Edmonton Journal, July 9, 2014

Blue-green algae back at Pigeon Lake, Coal Lake too Alberta Health Services issues advisory

BY NELSON WIEBE, EDMONTON JOURNAL JULY 9, 2014

Recommend 15 Tweet 0 G+1 1 Pin it Comment 4 Share This

STORY PHOTOS (1)



An advisory has been issued warning visitors and residents at Pigeon Lake to avoid swimming in or drinking water from the lake, due to blue-green algae. This photo shows the algae bloom in the summer of 2013.

STORY TOOLS

E-mail this Article

Print this Article

Font: A A A A

SPOTLIGHTS

- Sign up for Journal email alerts
- Follow the Edmonton Journal on Twitter
- Some of our favourite things on Pinterest
- Download the Journal's Android app
- Follow the Journal on Facebook
- Follow all the Journa

4. Wizard Lake Advisory – Edmonton Journal July 18, 2014

Wizard Lake hit with blue-green algae advisory

BY EDMONTON JOURNAL JULY 18, 2014

Recommend 10 Tweet 0 G+1 0 Pin it Comment 0 Share This

STORY PHOTOS (1)



This photo shows the algae bloom in the summer of 2013.

STORY TOOLS

E-mail th

Print this

Font: A A A

SPOTLIGHTS

- Sign up for J email alerts
- Follow the E Journal on T
- Some of our things on Pi
- Download th Journal's An
- Follow the J Facebook