

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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SWIMMING ADVISORY LIFTED FOR LOWER BLACKWATER ARM

On July 7, 2023, VDH posted an updated Status Report for the Swimming Advisory on the Blackwater arm of SML. Samples taken on June 26th on the lower Blackwater arm of SML contain safe levels of cyanobacteria and toxins. VDH has lifted the Swimming Advisory for the lower portion of the Blackwater arm to just upstream of the confluence with Gills Creek, at Channel Marker B-16.

The Swimming Advisory remains upstream of Gills Creek in the Upper Blackwater arm. DEQ is expected to sample the remaining areas upstream the week of June 10th. Recall that two (2) sampling events, 10 days apart, which show safe levels of cyanobacteria and toxins must occur before modification of the advisory for the Upper Blackwater can occur.

View the Updated Swimming Advisory here:

https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/178/2023/07/DRAFT_SML-Status-Report-7.7.23.pdf

DETAILS: On June 26th DEQ staff collected water samples at four (4) locations within the Blackwater arm. All four sites showed that concentrations of cyanobacteria and toxins are below the advisory levels and are considered safe. Because a prior sampling event on June 13th also showed safe levels, in the Lower Blackwater, the VDH can now modify the Swimming Advisory to only the portions of the Upper Blackwater upstream of Gills Creek, starting at Channel Marker B-16. This means that all of Gills Creek, Bull Run, Little Bull Run, the Lower Blackwater, and coves downstream of Gills Creek are no longer part of the Swimming Advisory.

View map of Updated Swimming Advisory:

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/waterborne-hazards-control/algae-bloom-surveillance-map/>

DEQ staff will sample the remaining sites in the Upper Blackwater arm the week of July 10th. IF and only IF these results show safe levels of cyanobacteria and toxins, then a second sampling event, 10 days following, must also show safe levels before the Swimming Advisory can be lifted for the Upper Blackwater. During the same week of July 10th, DEQ staff also plan to revisit the Roanoke arm, for their regularly scheduled monitoring run, and if time allows, will investigate Roanoke arm citizen reports from the week preceding July 1st. The results of a single sample collected July 6th on the Roanoke arm at the location of a citizen's report are expected early next week.



While the Swimming Advisory remains in place for the Upper Blackwater arm, this does not mean you cannot enjoy the lake. Proper precautions and following the advisory from VDH regarding swimming should be followed. Recreational activities such as boating, fishing, and kayaking are all safe, if you wash with clean water following. Dogs should be kept out of the Blackwater portion of the lake. Keep an eye out for anything that looks like spilled paint, either light green or blue in color. Do not swim in water that is scummy or smells bad.

For a reminder on the advice from VDH, visit <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/waterborne-hazards-control/harmful-algal-blooms/>

For the HAB Resource Center provided by SMLA, visit <https://smlassociation.org/hab/>

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ABOUT SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE ASSOCIATION

Smith Mountain Lake Association (SMLA) is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit, all volunteer organization whose mission is to protect the water of Smith Mountain Lake and promote safe recreation. SMLA relies on memberships and grants to support the programs that keep SML clean and safe. The Association is administered by the SMLA Board of Directors, with leadership from its Lake Quality and Water Safety Councils. Join, Donate, Volunteer and learn more at www.SMLAssociation.org.