

Partial test results in for FH beach

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Executive Director Paul Palagyi.

Lake Metroparks and the Lake County General Health District are both awaiting all of the water sample test results taken Monday from the former's 21-acre Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park.

The most important results may not come until Friday, however.

On Monday the parks system posted signs at the popular bathing-swimming beach that informed the public of possible blue-green algae contamination.

What is known is that just-released initial water sample test results indicate that the presence of bacteria per milliliters is above 800,000. The threshold is 4,000.

However, simply because the bacterial count is excessive does not mean the organisms also contain toxins. Such toxins, though, can be so potent that they can affect liver and brain functions.

Which is why neither the parks system nor the county health department are taking any chances.

With signs in place, people are being urged to exercise caution, particularly those groups considered especially vulnerable.

Among them are children, the elderly and those persons with compromised immune systems, said Lake Metroparks Interim

Palagyi said the parks system also closed the dog swimming portion of the beach only.

This small section is at the far east end of the park, and the closure doesn't affect the remainder of the beach, Palagyi said.

Dog owners are reminded that canines typically come into greater contact with potentially contaminated water by swallowing water or licking their wet fur.

Such results are important because of the Fourth of July holiday today likely will attract a large crowd of people, including many swimmers.

"We are waiting on the results from the Lake County General Health District, and we will follow the appropriate protocol for dealing with the algae once we receive those results," Palagyi said.

Lake Metroparks' Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park saw 87,500 visitors last July and 301,000 total visitors in 2011.

Palagyi said the unit is on track to exceed these numbers, owing to the more favorable weather this year than in 2011.

For further information about the methodology of dealing with the health risks and advisories related to blue-green algae, visit the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's website at www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/HAB.aspx