



## **Water Quality: What YOU can do to help Silver Lake.** **Tips from the Silver Lake Association's Water Quality Committee**

### Tip Five: What to know about Harmful Algae Blooms (HAB)

Algae are generally harmless and naturally present in all waters. At times algae can add taste to the water, cause odor problems, and consume dissolved oxygen when falling to the lake bottom. Algae growth depends on: nutrients, sun light, warmth, calm winds, and seed population. While most of these factors are naturally occurring, we have some control over the nutrient (e.g., phosphorous) supply.

Under certain conditions algae abundance rises and blooms are observed. In rare cases where the algae produce toxins that are harmful to animals and humans, these are referred to harmful algal blooms (HABs). It can be hard to discriminate HABs from other algae blooms. As a result, it is generally wise to avoid algal blooms. Freshwater blue-green algae blooms produce toxins and may have the appearance of spilled green paint. Blue-green algae are actually cyanobacteria and they produce a robust toxin called microcystin.

What precautions should be taken during an algae bloom? [Remember only a few algae may produce toxins.]

1. Do not drink the water.
2. Do not inhale water droplets. These can come from splashing water, use of PWCs, water skiing and other water related recreation.
3. Avoid skin contact with any scum on the top of the water.
4. If using lake water in your cottage/home, do not use the water for any purpose if it is off color. It should be noted that toxins are only removed by using special filtration.
5. Thoroughly rinse any food that has been sprayed with lake water.
6. Keep pets out of lake water and away from any algae that may have been washed up on shore. If pets come in contact with the algae, thoroughly rinse them off to remove all algae as the hair will trap the algae and then when the pet grooms itself, it can ingest the algae.



Additional information is available at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/64824.html> or <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html>