

# State upgrades toxic algae warning at Lake Erie beach

State officials strengthened a health warning for toxic algae at a Lake Erie beach after tests revealed high levels of a liver toxin in the water.

Swimming and wading are now “not recommended” at Maumee Bay State Park’s beach in Lucas County. The previous warning warned people not to touch blue-green algae scum or swallow water while swimming.

Tests detected a liver toxin, called microcystin, in concentrations more than twice as high as a safety standard the World Health Organization has set for swimmers.

Officials on Thursday also posted a warning at the Kelleys Island public beach after blue-green algae was observed in the water there. Officials are awaiting test results on toxins.

Although algae has just recently started coming to Lake Erie shorelines, this year’s “algae bloom” already has been deemed 2.5 times more dense than a record bloom set in 2009.

Satellite images show the algae covering most of the lake’s shallow western basin.

Blue-green algae are common in most Ohio lakes and streams but grow thick in water feeding on phosphorus from manure, fertilizers and sewage that storms wash into waterways.

The only other warning is posted at Grand Lake St. Marys in western Ohio. Warnings have been posted and removed from a number of lakes this summer.