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Wisconsin's Harmful Algal Bloom Program: Public Health & Environmental Management Partnership

Wisconsin's Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Program is a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). This interagency effort will be illustrated, with a focus on collaborative response to HAB-related illnesses, tracking bloom reports, and outreach efforts. WDHS leads capacity building and outreach to tribal and local health agencies responding to HAB issues within their jurisdictions. WDNR leads HAB tracking and documentation efforts using reports from the public to WDNR and WDHS, and remotely sensed data from the Cyanobacteria Assessment Network. Together, the agencies investigate human and animal illnesses that are potentially related to cyanobacterial exposure. WDHS receives illness complaints, administers a standardized questionnaire, and evaluates reported symptoms and health history. WDNR evaluates reported environmental conditions and satellite imagery and collects samples if possible. Testing results are jointly evaluated and conveyed to tribal and local authorities with recommendations and resources such as standardized signage for beach closures. Additional collaborative outreach efforts, such as presentations at state lake conferences, joint news releases, and HAB season webinars will be highlighted.